

## **Teaching Grounded Audiences:**

### **Burke's Identification in Social Media and First Year Composition**

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#### **Abstract**

First year composition students regularly engage in composing rhetorical messages to their virtual audiences while participating on social media. This previous experience and prior knowledge with audiences in social media can transfer to audience awareness and appeal in academic writing. While composition scholars have continued to stress the potential these sites have in their use in composition and analysis, more research is needed regarding the transfer of students' previous experience and prior knowledge with audience in social networking to academic writing. Social media users consciously or unconsciously appeal to a specific audience, their friends/followers. Rhetorician Kenneth Burke described this interaction as *identification*. He describes how individuals will persuade their audience by "identifying" with them in certain ways. This current pilot study analyzed how students were able to use Perkins and Salomon's high road transfer theory to transfer audience awareness from their social networking experience to academic writing in my first year composition class. I taught students a unit on Identification and Social Media at the beginning of the semester, and students analyzed their own social media profiles to observe how they already practice identification unconsciously. Students then applied Burke's identification theory to the academic writing they did later in the semester. Overall, students applied their audience awareness that they practiced in social media to their academic writing. Also, the students not only increased in their use of identification over the semester, but also demonstrated close audience awareness and adaptation by increasing their identification to their specific audiences.

### 1.1 Objectives

Because of the exponential use of social media and their rhetorical significance, leaders in composition scholarship have called for more research on social media's potential in composition instruction. However, few researchers provide empirical evidence on the efficacy of using social media in the composition classroom, and fewer still discuss the possibility of transferring students' rhetorical knowledge of audience awareness in social media to academic writing. The lack of empirical research regarding how to use social media in the composition class could lead to teachers neglecting to take advantage of students' prior experience in rhetorical engagement. Thus, fewer students would see their constant interactions online as rhetorical and would be unable to transfer and apply that rhetorical awareness to other communication. My thesis fills that gap by collecting and analyzing data regarding the benefits of identification and transfer relevant to teaching audience awareness for academic writing using social media.

To accomplish this, I conducted a pilot of my own first year composition students (in ENGL 1101, fall 2014) to analyze the transferability of the students' audience awareness skills in social media to academic writing. I taught my students Burke's theory of identification in order to facilitate their transfer of audience appeal principles and skills from the familiar contexts of social media to the new contexts of academic writing. This pilot study has prepared me to design and undertake a larger full experiment that would allow me to make wider claims on the validity of my findings.

My thesis not only provides empirical data on the use of social media in the composition classroom, but this study also provides a viable curriculum to instruct students about audience

for academic writing. This kind of pedagogy could be especially helpful in guiding students to achieve a kind of meta-awareness of their communication practices. This pedagogy would not only engage students who spend time on social media sites but would encourage those students to have greater rhetorical savvy when interacting online as well as when writing in more formal contexts.

## **1.2 Context**

From my own experience on social media, I have noticed that social networking seems to cultivate in its users rhetorical practices as they maneuver in online interactions, practices which expand social media's ability to be mined for pedagogical applications. I also see social media's potential in pedagogy growing with the wide expansion of social networks. Facebook alone "announced that by the end of 2011 there had been 100 billion friend connections, and in recent months users had been registering 2.7 billion Likes and Comments per day" ("Facebook," 2014, Description, para. 10). To me, these daily connections constitute a rhetoric and multimodal composition resource that users are already utilizing with very real audiences.

But beyond social media's expansion, composition scholars have been calling for more focus on this digital rhetoric to take place in order to utilize the potential found within this digital communication (Lanham, 1995; Faigley, 1997; Selfe, 1999; Wysocki et al., 2004; Hawisher & Selfe, 2004; Clark, 2010; Maranto & Barton, 2010). Kathleen Yancey (2009), a past president of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), asserted, "We can and should respond to these new composings and new sites of composings with new energy and a new composing agenda" (p. 7). Yancey's digital imperative requests that researchers and teachers make use of these digital writing sites to best teach students and connect with them.

Specifically in digital rhetoric, there is a need to research the potential these online

communities have in encouraging the transfer of rhetorical principles within social networking students. College students routinely compose messages to and identify with specific audiences. My study will show how social media's compositional and rhetorical content can open doors for new methods of writing instruction and provide new ways to integrate new media in the classroom.

However, research into the transfer of rhetorical concepts within social networking to academic writing still needs development. The lack of empirical studies and research in social media and transfer pedagogy limits the understanding of the current research in the field. Even though scholars, such as Deborah Balzhiser et al. (2011), David Coad (2013), Jane Fife (2010), Courtney Patrick (2013), Jennifer Swartz (2013), Lindsay Sabatino (2014) and Stephanie Vie (2009) as well as others, have responded to the call in expanding the pedagogy about social media's uses in composition, few provide empirical research based experiments. Within the academic journals *Computers and Composition*, *Kairos*, *Computers and Composition Online*, and *Pedagogy*, as well as others, there have been articles on teaching persona creation, rhetorical analysis, and critical thinking in the composition class. Nevertheless, the transfer of students' previous experience and prior knowledge of audience from social media requires more scholarly analysis.

Many students already have much experience with rhetorical interaction on social media sites. The "transfer" of this is key within pedagogical practices because all "new learning involves transfer based on previous learning" (Bransford, Pellegrino, & Donovan, 2000, p. 53). Specific ways to enact transfer sometimes need detailed praxis. Perkins and Salomon (1988), for example, explained that dynamic "high road" transfer can occur when students abstract principles and skills from one context and apply them to another (p. 25). Utilizing their

principles of transfer would enable composition students to employ the principles they are practicing on social media sites in other communication scenarios. To identify audience awareness principles to transfer, this paper uses an established rhetorical theory as a framework. With this theoretical foundation, Perkins and Salomon's "high road" transfer can enable more students to apply social networking's skills to composition.

I argue that because Facebook and other social media sites demonstrate so much user generated text and communication that students are familiar with, these sites can be used as a bridge to rhetorical analysis, particularly with audience awareness and appeal. Recent research has demonstrated the various and detailed kinds of rhetorical practices that Facebook users engage in (Grosbeck, Bran, & Tiru, 2011). Facebook users consciously or unconsciously appeal to various specific audiences, including their friends. Aware of this understanding of audience, Lindsay Sabatino (2014) has asserted that "These digitally literate people quickly move between various mediums knowing how to present different information through these mediums to best reach their desired audiences" (para. 1). Adapting to audiences is something that the rhetorician, Kenneth Burke, described as *identification*. He explained how individuals will persuade and connect to their audience by "identifying" with them in certain ways; as a result, his theory is of particular relevance to the analysis of social media. I claim that social media can be used in teaching composition to transfer what students know about friends and user profiles to teach them about audience awareness and appeal. Moreover, by associating Burke's identification with their own social media uses, students will be able to apply those same principles within their academic writing.

### **1.3 Social Media as an Integral Part of the Digital Imperative**

#### ***1.3.1 The Digital Imperative***

Composition and computers scholars (Lanham, 1995; Faigley, 1997; Selfe, 1999; Wysocki et al., 2004; Hawisher & Selfe, 2004; Yancey, 2009; Clark, 2010; Maranto & Barton, 2010) have long called for greater study to take place within digital rhetoric. One of these scholars, Cynthia Selfe (1999), has argued, “We... need additional research on how various technologies influence literacy values and practices and research on how teachers might better use technologies to support a wide range of literacy goals for different populations” (p. 431). Echoing Selfe’s argument ten years later Kathleen Yancey (2009) asserted, “It is time for us to join the future and support all forms of 21<sup>st</sup> century literacies, inside school and outside school....This is a call to action, a call to research and articulate new composition” (p. 1). Although this call to action includes all kinds of technology-mediated writing, Yancy specifically noted social networking sites among high school students. She said that “these students understand the power of networking.... [T]he students understood the new audiences of twenty-first century composing.... [W]e can imagine the ways we might channel this energy for a cause more serious, for a purpose more worthy” (p. 6). Yancey’s report dealt with digital rhetoric in general, but her example shown here demonstrates that social media specifically is recognized as having great potential to teach composition.

Yancey’s call has emphasized the expediency of new pedagogies within digital rhetoric. Another scholar, Elizabeth Clark (2010), expounded on Yancey’s report, “This publication marks a distinctly new era of computers and composition—a challenge to articulate how technology is radically transforming our understanding of authors and authority and to create powerful new practices to converge with this new digital world” (p. 27). Clark went on to describe that the future of our composition shall be based on the worldwide, collaborative, and public nature of our texts, and that this should construct a “‘digital’ imperative” that should

include technology within composition teaching practices. She asserted, “Today the composition classroom should immerse students in analyzing digital media” (p. 28). Such composition practices are needed; thus my inclusion of transfer theory and identification within computers and composition realizes this call and implements a rhetorical analysis of this type of digital composition.

Within digital media research for composition, social networking sites such as Facebook have specifically received attention. Composition scholars (Grosbeck, Bran, & Tiru, 2011; Sabatino 2014; Maranto & Barton, 2010) are noticing how these sites provide example communication platforms that can be used in the classroom. For example, Stephanie Vie (2008) has explored the use of sites such as Facebook:

[S]tudents are already engaged in production activities in online social networking sites, and if we hope to assist students in significant ways with their writings, we must engage in their production methods.... The time has come, then, for us to pay attention to online social networking sites so that we can effectively teach technological literacy in the writing classroom. (p. 11)

Scholars such as Vie have recognized that we need to meet students where they are already producing text (a.k.a. social media sites) if we are to best teach digital literacy in composition. Even though these technologies have not been around for long, scholars such as these have demanded more in-depth research.

### ***1.3.2 Why Social Media?***

Statistics show that social media are major communication and composing sources not only among millions of the general public, but more specifically among the college student population. In general, the Pew Research Center (2014) found that 90% of online adults ages 18-

29 use social networking sites (Fact Sheet). Facebook (2014) has announced that they now have more than “1.35 billion monthly active users... [and more than] 864 million daily active users” (“Company Info”, Statistics). Specifically, a study done among college undergraduates in the United States found that over 90% of students use Facebook as a communication tool, over  $\frac{1}{3}$  use Twitter, and one in four use LinkedIn, not to mention that “31% percent of students report that they use other social networking sites.” Also most undergraduates (58%) use Facebook more than once per day (Dahlstrom, de Boor, Grunwald, & Vockley, 2011, p. 13). These statistics demonstrate the relevance that social media have in students’ lives, making them a model platform for analysis. Consequently teachers using social media sites will be able to reach more students in learning audience awareness and appeal.

Social media draws composition scholars’ attention due to the large amounts of written and multimodal communication that take place on them. Recognizing their own place in communication, Facebook (2015) declared its mission “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what’s going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them” (“Company Info,” Mission). The idea of “sharing ideas” is also expressed in Twitter and Instagram’s mission statements (About Twitter, 2015; Instagram, 2015). Social media users “express” or “create” (as in the case for Twitter’s mission statement) in various multimodal forms, creating incredible masses of digital communication. In fact, three years ago, for Facebook alone, the user generated material amounts to over  $\frac{1}{2}$  a petabyte, or 500 million gigabytes per day (Sharwood, 2012). There are over 277,000 tweets sent with Twitter every minute, and in that same 60 seconds users share 216,000 photos on Instagram and almost 2.5 million pieces of content are shared on Facebook (James, 2014). With so much composing and



interpersonal communication taking place, social media sites are platforms worthy of rhetorical analysis.

But teaching composition with social media requires more than just explaining the digital imperative and demonstrating social media's accessibility and popularity. The question of "how" also needs addressing. As Yancey (2009) wondered, "In other words, these students know how to compose, and they know how to organize, and they know audience. How can we build on all that knowledge? How can we help them to connect [their skills] to larger issues?" (p. 6). This is the gap my study fills: pedagogy's transfer theory can use Kenneth Burke's theory of identification to guide freshman composition students in transferring their prior audience awareness from social media to academic writing.

## **2.0 DISCIPLINARY CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Social Media in the Composition Class**

While the call for research on social media includes a variety of platforms, Facebook has served as the most constant platform for rhetorical and compositional study. This is because Facebook is still the most popular social network among college students, and it allows for a variety of social interactions, whether that be posting status updates, writing on one another's profile timelines, liking, commenting, sharing one another's posts, uploading pictures and other media, or instant messaging. Other social media sites have started to garner scholarly attention, but they do not often have the virtual clout that Facebook has of dominating the social media scene. Nonetheless, social media sites such as Twitter and Instagram are seeing an increase in college student use, followed by other sites such as Snapchat, Google+, and Pinterest.

The changing popularity of different social media sites requires that the best practices in composition pedagogy that utilize social media are the ones that focus on the underlying

principles of communication that these sites are involved in. Pedagogies that are specific to single social media platforms or that are linked to only specific software applications run the risk of becoming obsolete. This flux of social media platforms is readily apparent. Since Myspace's peak in 2008 (close to 75 million users), the number of people using Myspace has decreased to around 50 million and the platform has since been described as "struggling" (Smith, 2015, Myspace Users; Stenovec, 2011, para. 1). Facebook, which passed Myspace in popularity in 2008, according to a recent study, has seen "a drop in active usage in 2014 (of -9%)." The same study also shows that other social media platforms—Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Tumblr—saw a significant increase in users (Mander, 2015, para. 2-3). Not to mention that each of these platforms regularly undergoes changes in appearance and format (Andrew, 2015). All of these statistics show that specific social media sites can undergo constant changes both in design and popularity. To deal with changes in conventions, Charles Kostelnick and Michael Hassett (2003) have explained that effective teachers, instead of teaching skills specific to a single software, "would emphasize the social underpinnings of conventional practices, emphasizing that those practices depend of a group of users to shape and sustain them and therefore are constantly in flux" (p. 229). Thus, emphasizing only a single social media site without extrapolating the general communication elements and theory can prove to be problematic.

Notwithstanding, despite Facebook being only a single platform, the literature reviewed here on Facebook will demonstrate how these scholars identify underlying social principles in Facebook that are applicable to social media in general. Moreover, due to the fact that students within this study almost universally focused on Facebook as the social media platform to analyze, this discussion here will concentrate mostly on the scholarship of Facebook. Additionally, the literature specified here also demonstrates the kinds of research on other social

### ***2.1.1 Research on Facebook in the Composition Class***

A common thread in the literature on Facebook in composition is the use of Facebook as a platform for rhetorical analysis. David Coad (2013), Stephanie Vie (2009), Courtney Patrick (2013), Jennifer Swartz (2013), Deborah Balzhiser et al (2011), Lindsay Sabatino (2014), Ryan Shepherd (2015), Ru-Chu Shih (2011), and Jane Fife (2010) in particular have discussed the pedagogical use of Facebook in detail. Most of them discuss persona creation and audience awareness as possible applications in their classroom practices. Because social media users create their own profile, how a person chooses to present themselves is rhetorical in nature, akin to the persona and voice that students use in academic writing.

Although it is generally acknowledged among these scholars that students learn useful skills from Facebook, pedagogical transfer is hardly ever discussed or even directly mentioned. Ryan Shepherd (2015) is the only scholar who discusses it at any length. Said he, "In particular, studies developing knowledge transfer between digital spaces and the composition classroom could provide useful data on how skills students learn on SNSs [Social Networking Services] might help them in first-year composition classes" (p. 93). However, besides Shepherd's brief mention, elements of transfer are often embedded within the practices that these scholars explain. David Coad (2013), for example, argued that "[interacting on Facebook] helps students see how communication works in real, live rhetorical situations.... I found [my instructional practices] useful for helping them acknowledge the skills they are building in these writing spaces" (Students' Critical Thinking, para. 2). Building upon the idea that Facebook is a rhetorically engaged platform, Courtney Patrick (2013) defended the notion of audience awareness taking place within Facebook:

With their particular audience and the chosen values in mind, student-users of Facebook decide what information to post and make present on a daily basis in an effort to accept and adhere those values. Whether through a status update, a photo upload, or a list of favorite movies, student-users are constantly choosing between what to show and how to show it in order to gain approval from their particular audience. (Part II, para. 1)

These scholars understand the importance that Facebook has in building rhetorical knowledge and skill.

As I will show later in this thesis, Facebook, being a communication rich environment, engenders the application of many different rhetorical principles and styles. Both Jennifer Swartz (2013) and Jane Fife (2010) mention this applicability and argue that such application is one reason why Facebook is important to study in composition. In explaining her reasons for using Facebook in her class, Swartz explains, “To help students see the ways in which writing is relevant to their everyday lives... I introduce Facebook... to the classroom where we look at these social networking sites as rhetorical texts” (Introduction). In the data-based study using Facebook in an ESL (English Second Language) classroom, Ru-Chu (2011) they concluded that “Without the convenience and popularity of the Facebook platform, the students would not have been so motivated to participate in the study or have enjoyed the learning process as much. Facebook also facilitated peer interaction successfully during the period of peer assessment” (p. 841). Facebook not only allows students to practice rhetorical analysis, but it also provides connections between what students are learning in the classroom and what they are writing outside it.

Most of the articles mentioned at the beginning of section 2.1.1, Research on Facebook in the Composition Class, provide some detail on a variety of pedagogical strategies that would

enable Facebook to serve as an artifact for study and discussion, providing a discussion of the benefits of using Facebook in the classroom. Nevertheless, most provide only anecdotal evidence, an explanation of the practices, and a description of students' responses and reactions. Regarding this gap in the literature, Shepherd (2015) said "A small number of studies have even linked Facebook or SNS use to composition..., exploring composition classroom practices using SNS but not really gathering data about how SNSs are used," he maintains that "there has not been a study systematically exploring how students perceive composing practices on SNSs" (p. 86-87). Thus my study fills that gap by providing empirical evidence in a systematic study to substantiate the claims for social media's place within the composition classroom.

Furthermore, these articles mainly lack the application of a theoretical background that would show students what to look for and apply from social media sites like Facebook to their academic writing. Thus I propose two theoretical frameworks, Burke's rhetorical theory of identification and Perkins and Salomon's theory of "high road" transfer. Kenneth Burke's identification theory provides a theoretical framework that would allow students to transfer specific elements of audience awareness and appeal, namely the techniques of identification, from social media to academic writing, while high road transfer would provide me with the pedagogical framework/practice needed to teach my students to identify identification principles within social media and apply them to academic writing.

## **2.2 Burke's Theory of Identification and Audience Awareness**

Kenneth Burke's identification theory restructures communication with the focus on connecting with the audience. Burke (1951) called his ideas the "new" rhetoric as opposed the rhetoric proposed by the classic philosophers such as Aristotle. He argued, "[T]he key term for the 'old' rhetoric was 'persuasion' and its stress was upon deliberate design. The key for the

‘new’ rhetoric would be ‘identification,’ which can include a partially unconscious factor in appeal” (p. 203). Identification has always remained a key principle in Burke’s explanations of rhetoric. In order for a rhetor to effectively persuade his audience, he or she needs to identify the message with the audience’s interest. Without this approach, students’ understanding of the importance of audience appeal and awareness would suffer. This significance was reflected when Dennis Day (1960) argued that “Burke’s approach is significant not because he regards identification as a means of achieving persuasion, but because he regards it as the *only* means of achieving persuasion” (273). Identification is relevant in teaching composition students about audience, giving students focus in their analysis and rhetorical praxis. Students can also easily apply identification in rhetorical analysis and practice within social media and academic writing.

Identification according to Burke revolves around a rhetor “identifying” with an audience. He described that because we are all divided into separate beings, and because our language makes us further divided, we seek to identify one with another and bridge this division. This identification involves finding “substance” that the two parties have (or assume to have) in common. This substance can be any kind of properties that may exist among people. As this common substance is revealed, Burke says that the parties are “consubstantial.” The more an individual can show that they and their ideas and arguments are consubstantial with their audience, the more identification occurs and the more persuasive that individual is. Therefore, identification is persuasive because it bridges division (Burke, 1953, pp. 20-22, 55).

In basic terms, this identification is a way of looking at audience awareness and appeal. Because persuasion centers on communication to a known and specific audience, the rhetor must find a way to appeal to them. Burke’s method of identification demonstrates how appealing to an audience by identifying with them results in persuasion. Burke (1953) described his theory

further:

Here is perhaps the simplest case of persuasion. You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his.... And you give the “signs” of such consubstantiality by deference to an audience’s “opinions.” For the orator, following Aristotle and Cicero, will seek to display the appropriate “signs” of character needed to earn the audience’s good will.

True, the rhetorician may have to change an audience’s opinion in one respect; but he can succeed only insofar as he yields to that audience’s opinions in other respects. (pp. 55-56)

Burke showed the importance of audience awareness in persuasion, and how identification is the key for addressing audience. What is necessary then is to understand how individuals can “talk [their audience’s] language” and “display the appropriate ‘signs’ of character.” An audience is more likely to go along with and be persuaded by an idea that is aligned to their own interests, values, and goals. When rhetors identify their message with their audience, they can encourage the audience to accept what is being given because what is offered already fits what the audience might want.

Identification does not have to be conscious or even true to occur; the audience needs only to assume the identification is real. Burke (1953) explained that through “ingenious” identification individuals might identify with their audience without realizing it, “there is a wide range of ways whereby the rhetorical motive, through the resources of identification, can operate without conscious direction by any particular agent” (p. 35). Brooke Quigley (1998) reasoned that “Burke encourages us to look at processes that are semi-conscious, less than obvious, mundane, and representative” (p. 1) Individuals are not always fully aware of the identification that they do, but identification still occurs on a subconscious level. Also, cunning (untrue)

identification occurs when the individual attempts to identify in false ways. This idea was developed by Lawrence Rosenfeld (1969): “The identification is cunning because it does not actually exist, but is only created to achieve a desired end” (p. 182). Persuasion can still be effective in these instances because the audience believes the identification is real. Rosenfeld (1969) argued, “In the... case mentioned by Burke, where A *assumes* he shares a common interest with B, there is still a sharing of a common element. Whether A does contain the element of interest or whether he assumes he contains the element, the effect of sharing an element is the same” (p. 178). There are many examples in modern media where the audience is lead to believe that they share something in common with the speaker or writer.

Burke explained in general terms some of the strategies that are used in identification. These strategies were later developed in more detail by George Cheney (1983). He argued that there are three main strategies that can be derived from Burke: “1. The common ground technique.... 2. Identification through antithesis.... 3. The assumed or transcendent ‘we’” (p. 148). The first strategy, COMMON GROUND, involves the basic method of locating what the two parties have, believe, or think in common. The second method, ANTITHESIS, requires the “act of uniting against a common enemy” (p. 148) or that the individual locates an entity or idea that both find to be against them or their beliefs. The third technique, the TRANSCENDENT “WE,” covers the use of the word “we” to connect disparate parties. “We” and its other forms identify the individual with their audience in some common group with the same goals, values, and such. These strategies encompass many others, but as a framework they serve to implement identification well. They do not replace the classical argument strategies, but they are meant to enhance the direct appeal to the audience. When identifying with an audience, these tools will function to persuade that audience of the consubstantiality between the individual and their



audience.

These identification strategies draw upon different identification sources as building blocks to the strategy. Burke mentioned that within identification, there are several overlapping sources from which identification is pulled from. Similar to Cheney, Stephen Littlejohn (1992) extrapolated and explained three of them in his study of Burke: material, idealistic, and formal. He explained that “Material identification results from goods, possessions, and things.” This source draws from the physical things and statuses of the parties. He continued, “Idealistic identification results from ideas, attitudes, feelings, and values.” Standards and beliefs that a party has also are included in this source. The final source stems from different associations: “Formal identification results from the form or arrangement of the act” (p. 180). This “act” can usually be drawn from association from the same groups or events that the parties share. As individuals use the identification strategies, they draw from these sources, and they can use them to show they are consubstantial with their audience and persuade them with their message. These sources can take a variety of shapes as can be shown later in the Methods chapter.

Although Kenneth Burke’s theories are several decades old, his discussion of identification remains particularly relevant, especially today in a world with so much online social media. Organizations such as the Rhetorical Society of America used Burke’s identification as the theme of its 2012 conference and asked presenters to ponder identification “as a place of perpetual reframing that affects who, how, and what can be thought, spoken, written, and imagined” (as qtd. in Ballif, 2014, p. 1). It is apparent that identification remains a structural piece of contemporary rhetoric, and as such, it can become a principal method to teach students about audience. Another more specific example of identification relevance comes from Gregory Clark (1997) who has also emphasized the importance of teaching composition students

the theory of identification in his article “Kenneth Burke, Identification, and Rhetorical Criticism in the Writing Classroom.” He explained that by teaching students to use this rhetorical method, they would become more understanding of the way that appeals are made to audiences, and that this method “suggests the shape of a pedagogy that embeds writing in reading and reading in writing and, as it does so, holds writers and readers alike accountable for what ‘follows’” (para. 13). Thus, identification is a useful and relevant tool for students to use in rhetorical analysis and practice.

### ***2.2.1 Other Rhetorical Audience Awareness Theories***

However there are other rhetorical theories of audience awareness, such as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s (1969) Universal versus Particular Audience, Edwin Black’s (1970) Second Persona, or Ede and Lunsford’s (1984) Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked model. Though these other rhetorical scholars all provide well developed methods of adapting to an audience, Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification most closely matches interaction online and how to carry that audience awareness and adaptation into academic writing.

In regards to audience and social media, Courtney Patrick (2013) already used Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca’s audience theory. Essentially this theory explores three ways to think about audience: the “personal audience” (involving the writer reasoning to himself), the “universal audience” (involving writing to an image of an ideal audience), and the “particular audience” (involving writing to a real audience) (Sloane, 2001, p. 61). When writing to audience, this theory is useful in instructing the writer over what arguments will work the best because the writer can evaluate the effectiveness of their arguments on the basis of what will appeal to each audience.

[T]he particular audience, which can be distinguished by character, persuasion, and

action, is subject to persuasion [a judgement grounded in the character of the subject], whereas the universal audience, depicted by objectivity, conviction and competence, holds to its convictions [a judgement grounded in objectivity valid for every rational being]. (Sloane, 2001, p. 61)

Thus, writers analyze the character of their particular audience to develop their persuasion while comparing their arguments against the universal audience to judge what is reasonable. However, this theory, though already applied to Facebook, does not account for all the particular ways in which writers can appeal directly to their audience. It therefore falls short of providing a thorough enough theory to create a coding rubric from.

Edwin Black (1970) discusses audience as a construct that the writer develops through their message. He argues for an auditor as audience (a judge of the work) and that writers attempt to move the actual audience (the actual auditor) to accept the role as presented. “Actual auditors look to the discourse they are attending for cues that tell them how they are to view the world, even beyond the expressed concerns, the overt propositional sense, of the discourse” (p. 113). Black then goes on explain that this acceptance is based off of the ideology presented in the work and how it connects to the actual auditor. While it may be reasoned that audiences take on roles of auditors of a text, what Black does not quite describe are the other elements besides ideology that a writer uses to connect with the audience, such as the material and formal identification described by identification.

Ede and Lunsford’s (1984) work integrates the concept of the constructed audience as described by Black (they call it the audience invoked) and the particular audience or real audience as explained by Perelman and Obrechts-Tyteca (the audience addressed). They argue that writers must consider both sets of audience in composing. They quote Douglas Parks (1982)

as a thorough summary of their theory. He said that audiences

tend to diverge in two general directions: one toward actual people external to a text, the audience whom the writer must accommodate; the other toward the text itself and the audience implied there: a set of suggested or evoked attitudes, interests, reactions, conditions of knowledge which may or may not fit with the qualities of actual readers or listeners. (as qtd. in Ede & Lunsford, 1984, p. 167).

Ede and Lunsford's model of audience provides a detailed look at what is involved between the actual and invoked audiences, but like Black, their theory does not explain the intricacies involved in connecting to audience, especially those demonstrated on social media.

Even though these theories describe ways in which students may view audiences as real people, Burke's identification, however, is still more relevant for my approach because of its applicability to social media, teaching grounded audiences. Specific and deliberate construction of rhetorical messages to definite audience regularly occurs within these online networks. As an example, Facebook (2014) as was mentioned earlier, has recognized that "sharing" and "connecting" are major uses people have for the site ("Company Info," Mission). These two words automatically involve more than one person. Obviously a Facebook user will "connect" with their friends (their audience), and will "share" with and "express" to that audience. Consequently Facebook acknowledges the idea of identifying with an audience. Even among scholars, there are examples of Burke's theories being applied specifically to social media sites. For instance, Tonja Mackey (2012) declared "the community of Facebook... validates Kenneth Burke's theories of dramatism, symbolic action, and the concept of language as the key to creating the world as we know it" (para. 1). Others, such as McDonald and Walsh (2014) have argued "This rhetoric of identification is embodied in social networking sites" (p. 6). As we can

see, Facebook users, as well as all social media users, consciously or unconsciously use these rhetorical theories in their daily online interaction within their online networks. The following section outlines how identification exists within the communication many students do on social media.

### ***2.2.2 Facebook as a Locus of Identification***

I will demonstrate that instructors can teach identification as audience awareness within the confines of Facebook as an example social media site. Because it is a source for community interaction and discourse, persuasion constantly takes place, both consciously and unconsciously, and that persuasion happens through identification with an individual's friend group. Shepherd (2015) mentioned the identification this way, "If a student perceived a group [on Facebook] as viewing their content often, they were more likely to have that same group in mind when posting content. That is to say that the audience addressed was often the same as the audience invoked" (p. 91). Shepherd and other researchers of social media sites recognize these qualities of audience awareness even though they do not specifically use Burke's identification.

Within Facebook, each person consciously or unconsciously tries to identify with their friend group. They post, comment, share, or "like" things that are assumed to be shared with their friends. Although not everyone who posts something to Facebook automatically thinks about how to identify with their audience, the thoughts of producing material that is appealing to their friends do occur. In any case, Burke discusses how an individual can be unaware of their adaptation to audience. Examples of this adaptation were argued by Burke, Marlow, and Lento (2009) when they found that "new users monitor their friends' actions on Facebook, and adaptively change their behavior on Facebook. Those who saw their peers posting many photos on Facebook posted more photos more often than those whose peers posted fewer photos" (as

qtd. in Wang, Tchernev, & Solloway, 2012, p. 1830). The reciprocity of these actions demonstrates that students are working towards appealing to their social media audiences.

Facebook's mission statement, mentioned earlier, implies Burke's identification. As Burke argues, because all individuals suffer from division—he calls it “guilt”—they seek out consubstantiality or consubstance, which means “shared” properties or “substance,” and this occurs as they post, upload, comment, and “like” with each other on Facebook. Facebook users seek to present a profile that appeals to their friend group. Wang et al. (2012) explained that “research suggests that reading others’ posts motivates individuals to generate and share content that represents their ideal images of self” (p. 1830). Not every instance of identification is a means to persuade an audience to an end, but often identification is an end itself. Identification may not happen in a hyper-rhetorical mindset, and each person's profile might not be entirely truthful, but those profiles still represent the attempts of identification. Peluchette and Karl (2010) explained that “Much of [students’ profile invention] depends on the image they wish to portray to others and who they perceive their audience to be” (p. 31). Peluchette and Karl as well as many other scholars recognize the qualities of identification and audience awareness within students’ practices on Facebook and social media.

### ***2.2.3 Social Media Identification Examples***

There have been a few case studies within the sub-field of Facebook in composition that demonstrate users adapting their Facebook practices to identify with their audiences. One example, by Kevin DePew (2011), follows the practices of three ESL students on Facebook. Much of DePew's findings revolve around how these students responded to their audiences. One Indian student, Bakul, was shown to have changed her profile picture of herself in traditional Indian dress to standard American clothing because some members of her social media audience

thought they were “wild” and “out there.” Her subsequent change to more “moderate” profile pictures shows her adaptation to her audience. These changes are representative of the COMMON GROUND strategy, where she appealed to her American audiences using clothes that they found to be the norm. This strategy draws on the material identification source in terms of associations created through similar clothes (a material possession). Another student, Dhanesh, also exemplifies the strategy of COMMON GROUND in how he fills out his “info” part of his profile with his “favorites” of music, movies, and interests. “With this group of interests, he wants his audience to read these items and think, ‘Wow! He does cool things.’” Dhanesh also draws upon the source of material identification to appeal to his audience. Dhanesh also provides examples of ANTITHESIS such as by posting parody pictures of Miley Cyrus, an act joining with others who want to make fun of the pop singer. This example of ANTITHESIS could draw on idealistic identification with shared negative opinions.

In another case study, Buck (2012) describes a digitally literate student, Ronnie, and his engagement with multiple audiences in a manner similar to identification. Buck describes how Ronnie, in response to Facebook’s change in privacy setting, changed his profile to read that he had studied at the fictitious school, Hogwarts, and that he was currently employed by the fictitious Ministry of Magic. This change, he said was a message to his friends over the need to keep information private from Facebook, encouraging his friends to think like him on the issue. This example demonstrates the strategy of the TRANSCENDENT “WE” by linguistically connecting himself to his others in order to “act together.” It draws on idealistic identification by using similarities in beliefs about privacy that he shared with his friends.

These few example are only some of many of the identification practices going on through social media. However, for students to become aware of what they are doing, the

instructor must use the pedagogical theory of transfer.

## **2.3 The Pedagogy of Transfer**

### ***2.3.1 Rationale for Transfer Theory***

To successfully build upon student's prior knowledge within social media, transfer theory is an essential component and serves as a basis for pedagogical practices. However, because transfer theory is such a broad pedagogical field, there are many different avenues of application. Consequently, deciding between theories depends on choosing the theory that best applies to the specific project and context of study. Within composition studies, much of the discussion about transfer revolves around transferring what the student learned in composition to other fields, disciplines, and careers (Smit, 2004; Rounsaville, 2012; Wardle, 2007, to name a few). However, a pedagogical step prior to transferring knowledge *from* composition is making sure that students are transferring knowledge and experience *to* composition. This prior experience is what researchers Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey (2012) defined their view of transfer: "a dynamic activity through which students, like all composers, actively make use of prior knowledge as they respond to new writing tasks" (p. 1). With the overwhelming amount that students compose in social media, these sites serve to provide transferable knowledge and praxis that students already have to composition and rhetoric.

### ***2.3.2 Other Pedagogical Transfer Theories***

Here mentioned are a few theories of transfer that are most relevant to this project, and my decisions for choosing or rejecting them. A transfer theory specifically related to prior knowledge and composition is that of Robertson et al. (2012) who discuss the importance of approaching teaching composition with an focus on what knowledge students are bringing from former studies. They argue,



Once in college, students tap their prior knowledge in one of three ways.... [S]tudents work within an assemblage model, grafting pieces of new information—often key terms or process strategies—onto prior understandings of writing that serve as a foundation to which they frequently return. Other students... work within a remix model, blending elements of both prior knowledge and new knowledge with personal values into a revised model of writing. And still other students... use a writing setback, what we call a critical incident, as a prompt to re-theorize writing and to practice composing in new ways.

(Concluding Thoughts, para. 1).

Robertson et al.'s theory essentially looks at transfer of prior knowledge as grafting on new information to old foundations, remixing new and old information into a revised model, or re-theorizing writing to write in new ways. Though this theory specifically focuses on the prior knowledge that students bring into first year composition, there was little practical detail about applications of the method. Also, the theory focused only on students' prior academic knowledge, what they had learned from high school, rather than knowledge gained outside the education system. Since the basis of this theory was looking at academic prior knowledge (high school academic writing to college academic writing), the theory did not adequately discuss how to help students who were making a larger shift in context, that of social media to academic writing.

Another example of a recent theory of transfer include Day and Goldstone's (2012) perceptual based model. Day and Goldstone argue that people are more likely to transfer learning when their perception of two contexts are based off of the same mental model. They said "knowledge transfer appears to be contingent on the psychological (rather than objective) similarity between two situations" (p. 168). Thus, transfer occurs when people can perceive

situations as similar. Within this study, students were taught to perceive audiences on social media and audiences in academic writing through the same mental model of identification. Yet despite the clinical studies cited in the study, Day and Goldstone overlook any practical classroom applications, making their theory more difficult to adapt to teaching. Additionally, besides demonstrating the link between a similar mental perception of an old and a new context and the transfer of learning, they do not describe the theory in more specific and detailed terms, thus making their theory harder to adapt into a method for research. However, aspects of their theory support Perkins and Salomon's high road transfer in that by finding a mental model that fits both contexts (from a prior context to a new one), they are demonstrating the "abstraction" relevant in high road transfer.

### ***2.3.3 Perkins and Salomon's High Road Transfer***

The pedagogical theory that informs my work is Perkins and Salomon's (1988) pedagogical "high road" transfer. They described high road transfer as depending on "deliberate mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context to application in another" (p. 25). Within Perkins and Salomon's (1988) theory, it is necessary to make the distinction between "high road" and "low road" transfer and the implications both have upon teaching. Low road transfer can be exemplified by one person learning cooking skills at home and then applying them in a new context such as a restaurant or in a college dorm. Low road only requires the slight shift of being put in a touch different scenario. In contrast, Perkins and Salomon explained that high road transfer "always requires reflective thought in abstracting from one context and seeking connections in another" (p. 26). In other words, if the context one is transferring knowledge to is different enough from the prior context, it requires a metaphysical understanding of the principles involved for transfer to occur.

Applying identification to employ knowledge and skills from social media to academic writing should specifically involve “high road” transfer. This is because the contexts of social media and the college essay are too different to use low road transfer. Students must identify and abstract identification concepts within social media to apply them to the different context of more formal composition. Additionally, Perkins and Salomon explain that when teaching for high road transfer, instructors should use the practice of “bridging.” They explain that

Rather than expecting students to achieve transfer spontaneously, one ‘mediates’ the needed process of abstraction and decision making.... For example teachers can point out more explicitly the more general principles behind particular skills or knowledge or, better, provoke students to attempt such generalizations themselves. (p. 28-29).

To teach for transfer, instructors can teach the “habits of self-monitoring by which the learners examine their own behavior and thought about how to approach a task,” “[d]eliberately provoke students to think about how they approach a task in and outside [the subject matter]” (like communication), and “[s]teal a little time from the source subject matter to confront students with analogous problems outside its boundary” (p. 29-30). When using social media in the classroom, high road transfer should serve as the pedagogical theory upon which instruction is based to enable the latent experience that students already have with the subject matter.

The benefits of using Perkins and Salomon’s theory of high road transfer are its relevance to the concept of using identification to transfer audience awareness from social media to academic writing as well as the theory’s applicability to classroom practices. Identification, as a rhetorical theory, has much in common with social media (as was demonstrated earlier) and the awareness of audience desired by composition teachers. Because of these similarities, identification provides an effective framework between the two that would encourage meta-

awareness in students of their rhetorical practices. This meta-awareness relates to the “reflexive thought” and “abstraction of a skill or knowledge” described in high road transfer, ergo making Perkins and Salomon’s theory an effective means of producing a pedagogical structure for teaching transfer. Besides the close relation of this transfer theory to this project, high road transfer provides many pedagogical practices that can be more easily applied in the classroom. By applying the concept of high road transfer, students can activate the prior knowledge they have from social media in order to apply it to academic writing. Without transfer, social media becomes just another information source, disconnected from any prior skills developed in its sphere.

### **3.0 METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

I designed a pilot study to examine the transfer of audience awareness with first year composition students. Because of time and resource limitations, I only studied my class, and there was no control group. Therefore, this study constitutes an “exploratory study” to determine trends in the data and to test out these methods in order to design a later full experiment. According to Janice Lauer and J. Asher (1988), exploratory studies can “identify emerging relationships among variables, which can later be tested” (p. 188). Because of limitations due to class availability and selection in education such studies are considered “necessary in the research in composition, though they may not produce as high a quality of evidence about cause-and-effect results as do true experiments” (p. 199). This preliminary research study analyzed the transferability of audience awareness from students’ social media practices to more formal academic writing using Burke’s theory of identification. I designed my pilot study and received an IRB approval for the study plan. During the fall of 2014, I conducted this study with the students of my freshman English Composition class. The study included a pedagogical unit on

Identification and Social Media to implement high road transfer, and a triangulation method of three different sources of data to ensure more valid results as well as discourse analysis of identification within the students' essays. All students have been given pseudonyms to preserve anonymity.

### **3.1 Recruitment**

Subjects came from my ENGL 1101 class, fall 2014. At the beginning of the semester, I used a script guide and consent form (Appendix A) to explain in general terms that I was working on my Master's Thesis and was doing research on how different teaching methods helped students understand different principles of rhetoric. I explained that I would need their written consent to study their writing and use it in my Thesis. Students would not be required to participate in my research, I told them, though I let the students know that all of the students in my class would be doing the same assignments and papers whether or not they participated in the study and that these assignments were just part of the class. Furthermore, participants would also be asked to complete a questionnaire. I was very clear about explaining that participating or not in the research would have no effect on their grade. All data collected would be left anonymous, and I defined "written work" as any essay exams, essays, blog posts, short analysis papers, reflection responses, reading responses, in-class writing, drafts, and quizzes they would complete as part of this class. For the full consent form and recruitment script please go to Appendix B.1 and B.2.

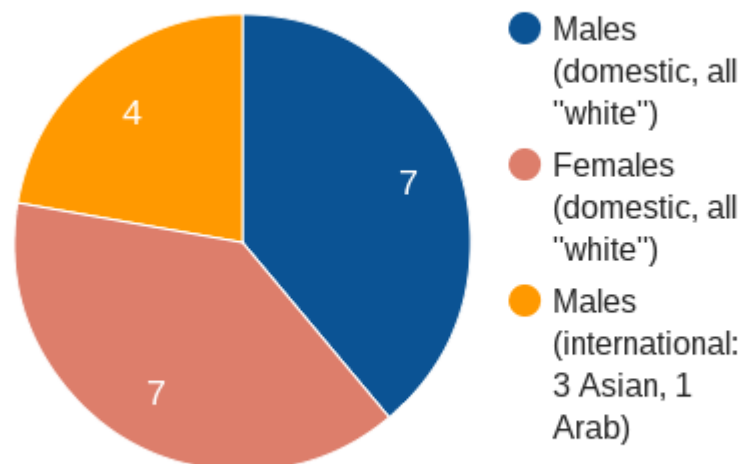
At the end of the semester, after the Post-assessment assignment, I debriefed the students about the study. I explained that study had been about collecting data specifically about using identification to transfer knowledge and skill about audience awareness and appeal from social media to formal and academic writing. I told them which methods I had used and then conducted

a final survey of student responses about the study in general. For the debriefing script and survey, please go to Appendix B.4.

### 3.2 Demographics

Out of a total of 24 students, I had 22 students who consented to be part of the study. At the end of the semester 3 students were eliminated from the study due to not completing enough assignments and 1 for not using social media. In the end, I had 18 students, 7 females and 11 males (see Graph 1). All of the students were under 25 years of age, and all but one sophomore were freshmen at Idaho State University. Four of the males were international students who had English as a second language. There were no female international students. Three of my international students were Asian, and the fourth was Arab. All the domestic students were all self-described as “white.”

**Graph 1: Gender, Ethnicity, and Nationality of Students**



As part of the demographic survey, I asked students to describe some of their social

media platforms. All but one of my students indicated that they maintained a Facebook profile, but only four said it was their only social media platform. Some of the other responses mentioned Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter. There were two students who used Tumblr, one who used Snapchat, one who used LinkedIn, and one who used Google+. Of all the students, only half said that Facebook was their top social media platform that they used, followed by seven for Instagram. Sixteen of the 18 students had over 100 friends or followers on their top social media site, and 10 of those students had 300 or more friends/followers.

Students also described their social media habits and practices which included how much they used social media. Fifteen students responded that they considered themselves either comfortable with social media or an “advanced user.” One even said that they felt like they were an “expert.” Two students reported themselves as either not comfortable or a “beginner” with social media. However, all but two of the students said that they checked their social media multiple times per day. Of the other two, one said she checked it once per day and the other said that he checked his “a few times a week.” All but four of the students said they spent at least 30 minutes per day on social media with almost half of the members of the class spending 1-2 hours or more each, some even spending up to 4-6 hours per day. There was a wide variation of how often students actively participated on their social media site (likes, comments, shares, posts, tweets, etc.); seven of the students reported participating at least once per day, five said they participated at least once per week, five more said “multiple times per month,” and one student said they interacted once per month or less.

All of the students reported using social media to “keep in touch with friends and family.” Ten of the students said that they also used social media “to share photos, videos, and music,” and ten students said that one reason they used social media was “to discover new music,

books, films, and other entertainment.” Other popular responses of why students used social media were seven students said “to meet new people,” and eight said “to find information and share feedback about brands and products.” Less popular responses were “to make professional and business contacts” (three), “to play games” (one), and “to promote a business or cause” (one). The full questionnaire of the demographic survey can be found in Appendix B.3.

### **3.3 Methods**

#### ***3.3.1 Implementation and Data Collection***

In my triangulation of methods for the study, I collected data from three different sources: (1) the Pre and Post-assessment; (2) the Quizzes, Social Media Analyses, and Reflections; and (3) the Essays. First, as a baseline comparison of growth, I did a Pre-assessment assignment at the beginning of the semester to evaluate the students’ current skills in audience awareness, measuring how much they used identification. To assess their change over the course of the class, the students also wrote a Post-assessment assignment at the end of the semester which also demonstrated how much identification they used. For the second source of data on how well they understood identification, I taught a unit at the beginning of the semester on “Identification and Social Media” where students learned Burke’s theory and analyzed identification’s presence within their own social media profiles with four analysis assignments. They also took two quizzes on their knowledge as well as wrote three personal reflections of their attempts at identification within each major essay that they wrote over the semester. The third source of data, meant to allow students to practice identification in formal ways and track their use of identification, was the four academic essays with specific audiences and specific purposes.

To best implement Perkins and Salomon’s (1988) high road transfer, within the



Identification and Social Media unit I specifically mediated the “abstraction” (reflective extraction of underlying principles) of identification. As Perkins and Salomon suggested, I guided students in learning about audience awareness from outside academic learning to the analogous area of audience in social media. This guidance took place in classroom instruction with class activities involving analyzing identification in their social media as well as the four written social media analyses. In those assignments I “[d]eliberately provoke[d] students to think about how they approach[ed]” (p. 30) dealing with an audience in their social networking. Within these analyses as well as the reflections of their major essays, I encouraged students to develop habits of self-examination and meta-awareness of how they used identification to continue their high road transfer of audience awareness throughout the semester.

### ***3.3.2 Coding and Analysis***

To examine the data and track the transfer of identification, specifically to analyze the Pre and Post-assessments and the Essays, I extrapolated specific coding categories from Cheney's identification strategies and Littlejohn's identification sources that those strategies draw upon. Cheney's (1983) identification strategies are the main ways that appeals are made in identification. These strategies are COMMON GROUND (connections based on things shared in common), ANTITHESIS (connections based on a common enemy or dislike), and the TRANSCENDENT “WE” (connections and language that transcend boundaries to place the writer and reader into the same groups). Littlejohn's (1992) identification sources are the building blocks to construct identification attempts and are the sources from which Cheney's strategies are created. These sources include material identification (based on tastes, physical goods, status, location, fashion, etc.), idealistic identification (based on ideas, values, beliefs, standards, opinions, etc.), and formal identification (based on shared groups and events). Littlejohn's

identification sources fit inside Cheney's strategies. For example, a student could use an ANTITHESIS strategy drawing on material dislikes, or on idealistic dislikes that they had in common with their audience.

Table 1 shows examples of how the identification strategies build off of the identification sources.



As can be shown by the table, each strategy draws on the three different identification sources. Associations created by the students were considered COMMON GROUND, for example as students would use examples or an awareness of their audience's status in life, physical goods, tastes, physical location, or fashion, they would be using "material identification." When students referenced or built arguments around ideas, opinions, values, beliefs, desires, goals, and standards their audience would have, I would consider them using "idealistic identification." Also, when students brought up groups from classes, schools, or communities that their audience would be a part of, these attempts fall under "formal identification."

In addition to associations that students would make, as they created disassociations that corresponded with the fears or dislikes in any of these areas (material, idealistic, and formal), I would code them as ANTITHESIS. ANTITHESIS also included examples of counter arguments, when the writer was creating an "us vs. them" scenario, or in mentioning negative things which they audience wouldn't like and would get them to side with how to fix/avoid these things. When an argument makes the audience want to "leave" the dissociated state or group it was considered ANTITHESIS.

The TRANSCENDENT "WE" operated when students grouped themselves (as the writer) with their audience under an umbrella of a collective noun of one of these sources, or if they used the first person plural. These sources were the building blocks to construct identification attempts. Therefore, if I found a sentence exhibiting these identification traits, then it was coded and counted. Identification instances were only counted and coded once per sentence or once when a series of sentences were building on the same thought.

After determining my coding categories, I used discourse analysis to go through the assignments to code the relevant appeals based on the identification strategies examples. In

coding the assignments I was careful to specify relevant attempts at identification. Persuasion is not achieved by mere volume of instances of commonality, but on using as much of the most pertinent instances of identification as possible, therefore irrelevant attempts at identification, ones not applicable to the topic, were discounted. I added up the relevant instances in each assignment to compare amounts in earlier writing to later writing. I then cross-analyzed students' use of identification over the three data areas to see how the class developed in their use of identification throughout the semester. By comparing the level of identification used effectively in the course of the class, I will be able to infer whether they expanded upon their use of identification within their academic writing, tracking their learning and transfer of its principles over the course of the semester.

## **4.0 PRE AND POST-ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

### **4.1 Rationale**

For the sake of establishing a baseline of comparison, I would need to analyze the level of student's awareness of and ability to adapt to audiences when producing academic writing at the beginning of the semester before any instruction had taken place. The Pre-assessment assignment would help me to know students' skill level in identification prior to any academic training in my class. Also, I designed the Post-assessment to mirror the Pre-assessment to easily compare the two and to be a final and overall demonstration of students' ability to use identification. This Post-assessment assignment would match the style of writing that the students would do in the Pre-assessment.

### **4.2 Methods**

#### ***4.2.1 Procedure and Format of the Pre and Post-assessment***

For the Pre-assessment, students were taken to the computer lab for the writing

assignment. They signed into ISU's learning management system, Moodle, and were given two essay prompts to complete in the quiz function of the system. Each student would complete both prompts on the computer and have 35 minutes per prompt. After writing on the first prompt for 35 minutes, they were then directed to switch to the next one. Students were notified of the time left for each prompt in five minute increments to allow them to complete each essay fully.

Both essay prompts were on the same topic and purpose: students were to think of a nonprofit organization and persuade their audience in a letter to help out that nonprofit in some way. Their first audience was ISU freshmen (in their first year of college), and their second audience was retired Pocatello citizens. By assigning two audiences on the same topic I would be able to assess whether students were able to adapt what they wrote for each audience.

The Post-assessment was set up in the same fashion so as to allow for easier and more effective comparison between the two without the addition of too many variables. At the end of the semester students were taken back to the same computer lab and given two essay prompts to complete on Moodle. The same time requirements were used as well. In order to avoid students re-writing the same essays as before, students were given a similar topic and two similar audiences. Once in the computer lab, the students were given a prompt asking them to think of a specific student health issue and persuade their audiences to make some kind of change. The audiences in this exam included ISU seniors (in their final year of college), and the ISU Student Health Center. Later, while coding the data, I realized that by using a "student" health issue, the prompt might have biased students into identifying more closely with their audiences due to choosing a topic that would almost necessarily relate to them. For a future study involving these methods, I might change the prompt to just a "health issue" and leave off the "student" part, thus avoiding a potential bias the prompt might have given. To see the full Pre and Post-assessment

questions and description please go to Appendix A.1.

#### **4.2.2 Analysis**

I used discourse analysis and coded the data with the identification strategies (as mentioned in the Methods Chapter) as the major criteria: COMMON GROUND, ANTITHESIS, and the TRANSCENDENT “WE.” More specifically, however, there were certain rhetorical moves that I saw students making in an attempt to appeal to their audience that required me to specify my criteria further. Not all of the appeals were specifically aimed at the audiences described in the prompt; instead, they were commonalities that would appeal to a larger spectrum of people. Therefore I needed to differentiate between instances where the student used language that specified their target audience and therefore showed awareness of and adaptability to their specific audience and instances when they still appealed to the audience in a general way but without awareness of the specific audience. I therefore differentiated my instances in coding between “SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION” (awareness of a specific audience) and “GENERAL IDENTIFICATION” (awareness of only a general audience). This differentiation only applied to the strategies of COMMON GROUND and ANTITHESIS but not the TRANSCENDENT “WE” because this third strategy operates by generalizing the audience and the writer into a group that includes both of them, thus straddling the line between being SPECIFIC and GENERAL. Consequently, the TRANSCENDENT “WE” strategy was not counted in either the SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION or the GENERAL IDENTIFICATION.

#### **4.3 Pre-assessment Results**

The results described in Table 2 show the different totals of strategies that students used all together. There were 18 students, and each had the two essays that they completed. The totals listed below add together the instances from each student, and also add together all of the student

responses. The table specifies how many times each strategy was used to appeal to their specific audiences or to a general audience.

Table 2 <i>Totals of Instances of Identification in the Pre-assessment</i>					
		SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION		GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	
Strategy	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS
Instances per Strategy	54	77	35	65	44
Total number of instances	54	112		109	
n = 18 students, 2 essays each.					

The number of instances of identification was surprisingly high among 18 students across the two essays. Initially I had hypothesized that students, though having an awareness of audience on social media, would not have much experience in the way of identifying with an audience in more formal genres, either specifically or generally. However, as was evidenced by the data, students were adapting their writing to their audiences. What stood out the most was that students were often trying to identify in a general way and were using appeals that would connect with a very general audience.

These general appeals were indicative of broad human traits. For example, many students appealed to the general humanity of their audience by using appeals to their altruism. One of these students, Beth, provided such an illustration, “the feeling that you've done something really good for once is just enough to get anyone to help.” This was identification in the sense that it was a general trait to desire to be considered “good” and “to help,” and would therefore fall



under idealistic identification. However, because this attempt at identification was not specific to ISU freshmen or even Pocatello retired citizens, it became hard to determine whether the attempt was made in awareness of who the audience really was or not. Other examples were appeals to pathos, most often when the student described problems that would elicit the audience's pity. Harriet described the plight of some foster children, "There are children who are afraid to go home from fear of what abuse might be inflicted on them. There are young 4 and 5 year olds taking care of their new born siblings, because their own mother is too high to care for anyone. There are children that need your help." Other students, like Will, would use ANTITHESIS against a "common enemy" of all humans. In describing how his chosen nonprofit, UNICEF, was helping, he described the threat of the Ebola virus, "This virus is critical to human. This is because there is no vaccination or medication." Yes the audience is "human," but the student did not demonstrate any closer awareness of their audience than that. Also, the more relevant and pertinent the identification strategies are to the audience, the better they persuade.

Again as can be seen in Table 2, GENERAL IDENTIFICATION and SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION were almost equivalent in total number of instances. This data demonstrates that students had some awareness of audience in academic writing, even to the point where they were using specific means to identify with them. It was also apparent that students favored the COMMON GROUND strategy the most, followed by ANTITHESIS and the TRANSCENDENT "WE."

The data shown in Table 3 presents the mean and standard deviation of the population of the instances of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION, GENERAL IDENTIFICATION, TRANSCENDENT "WE," and the mean total number of instances of identification per student. Again, this data set adds the number of instances together of both their essays that they wrote for the Pre-assessment.

Table 3  
*Analysis of Pre-assessment Totals*

	SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION	GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	Total
Mean number of instances per person	6.2	6.1	3.0	15.3
Standard Deviation	4.3	3.4	3.5	5.7
n = 18 students, 2 essays each. Standard deviation of population used.				

Though the mean number of instances of identification across the two essays in the Pre-assessment appeared more than expected, the standard deviation as shown in Table 3 was also high. Within the data set there was a large variety of student abilities ranging from very aware of a specific audience to very low awareness of any kind of audience at all. Some of the students wrote about the topic to their audiences without much deviance in language to suggest that they knew to whom they were writing. In their efforts to get their audiences to support their chosen nonprofit organization, their reasons were based off of appeals to altruism or pity that could be used to appeal to anyone. Others, however, created highly structured and developed arguments that were specific to their audiences.

#### 4.4 Post-assessment Results

The Post-assessment results displayed in Table 4 are formatted much like those from Table 2. The data covered are the total totals of each strategy of identification of all the students, both those strategies of SPECIFIC and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. The same students completed the Post-assessment, and these totals include all of students' uses of identification across the two essays that they completed for the Post-assessment.

Table 4 <i>Sums of Instances of Identification in the Post-assessment</i>					
		SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION		GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	
Strategy	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS
Instances per Strategy	63	184	116	27	28
Total number of instances	63	300		55	
n = 18 students, 2 essays each					

When comparing the SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION within the Post-assessment, it is obvious that the number of SPECIFIC instances was almost six times what the GENERAL IDENTIFICATION was. Table 4 also shows that COMMON GROUND is the favored identification and audience adaptation strategy followed by ANTITHESIS. The TRANSCENDENT “WE” strategy, used the least, was only used about 30% as much as COMMON GROUND was.

Within Table 5, the mean of how often each student used each kind of strategy is represented along with the standard deviation. As with the Pre-assessment, these mean totals are added together from the two essays per student. Both SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION are included, and since the TRANSCENDENT “WE” strategy fits into neither category, it is included in its own column.

Table 5

*Analysis of Post-assessment Totals*

	SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION	GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	Total
Mean number of instances per person	16.7	3.1	3.5	23.2
Standard Deviation	8.5	3.1	4.0	9.3
n = 18 students, 2 essays each. Standard deviation of population used.				

In the Post-assessment, we see a high use of identification, especially the SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION per person. Between both of the essays, the students used a mean of 23 instances of identification, which means that students were using identification strategies over 11 times per essay. This means that as students wrote a response, they used on average 11 different attempts to create identification with their audience in order to persuade them. The Post-assessment also showed that among the students there was a fairly high standard deviation, which demonstrates the various levels of proficiency among the different students. However, because of the high mean, even the student with the lowest use of identification still was using the strategies and attempting to identify at least 10 times across both of his responses. With some of the more proficient students, there was a much higher number of identification uses, with four students using the strategies 30 times or more between the two essays.

One of these students, Harriet, was even developing analogies designed to appeal to each audience. For her ISU seniors audience as she described the health issue of stress she put it in these terms, “This stress sneaks in like a student late to class sneaks in the back of the lecture hall. Soaking into my days like the pile of dirty and wet dishes left over by my roommates,”

images familiar to any student on the college scene, whether from being the perpetrator or the victim. For the same issue but for the Student Health Center she said, “[L]ike the persistence of a runny nose or the fear of getting the annual flu, this stress was not fun to deal with.” Any health professional--and especially those who work with high traffic health populations like colleges--is well acquainted with the unwelcome and hard to get rid of cold or flu. Compared to her Pre-assessment responses, where she didn’t use any kind of figurative language, these responses demonstrate a greater rhetorical awareness of her audience. Her use of simile describes the problem she is overcoming with her recommendation in images that both represents her awareness of the audiences’ experiences as well as applies them in effective ways to persuade her audiences to her opinion.

#### **4.5 Pre and Post-assessment Comparison Results**

Both the Pre and Post assessment served as an overarching evaluation to see how students started before the class and what changed by the end of it. Comparing the statistics of each data set and tracking the change between them would show how much more aware of and able to adapt to specific audiences the students became.

The data within Table 6 comes from tracking the mean increase of total instances of identification that students used from the Pre-assessment to the Post-assessment. The table also includes the mean increase in SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION per student. Another trend that Table 6 captures is the mean decrease in GENERAL IDENTIFICATION per student. The table does not break up the Pre-assessment and Post-assessment into the two essays the students did for each assessment, but instead just includes the total for the student between the two essays.

Table 6 <i>Pre and Post-assessment Comparison</i>			
	Amount of Increase/Decrease	Percent Increase/Decrease	Standard Deviation
Total Mean <i>Increase</i> of Identification Instances Per Person	7.9	52.0%	10.2
SPECIFIC Mean <i>Increase</i> of Identification Instances Per Person	10.4	167.9%	7.7
GENERAL Mean <i>Decrease</i> of Identification Instances Per Person	3.0	49.5%	3.3
n = 18 students, 2 essays for the Pre-assessment and 2 essays for the Post-assessment. Standard deviation of population used.			

Between the Pre and Post-assessment there was a significant increase in the amount that the students used identification. The majority of this increase was in SPECIFIC uses of identification, while overall there was a decrease in the amount of GENERAL IDENTIFICATION used. While there was this greater attention to specific audience and use of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION, the standard deviation of each category was also fairly high. Not all of the students increased in their use of identification in the same proportions. For a student such as Steve, he went from only 6 overall uses of identification to 35. Within his Pre-assessment responses he mainly just provided background to the issue in non-identifying ways. Yet in his Post-assessment responses he described a how a specific health issue had impacts on so many levels that senior students would care about. In summing up his argument he said,

So do yourself a favor, and get all of the vaccinations you can during the beginning of the year to ensure you won't get sick during your should-be-flawless senior year. Because if you do, you may miss class, not be able to make memories with friends, and you may even miss out on potential internships.”

In contrast to Steve, because of the general decrease in GENERAL IDENTIFICATION, four students' *overall* use of identification actually decreased overall. What is important to note, however, is that among all of the students, all but one of the students ended up increasing in their use of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION, and that the mean increase in SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION was almost 170%. Even with the high standard deviation, because the mean increase in SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION is greater than the standard deviation of that increase, it shows that the trend to use more SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION is valid.

This next set of data displayed in Table 7 shows the overall increase in the use of the different identification strategies. The table compares the raw numbers totaled from each assessment and shows the percent increase. Because of the significance of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION to the study, the table only shows those strategies, along with the TRANSCENDENT "WE," and not the GENERAL IDENTIFICATION totals.

Table 7 <i>Percent Increase in Different Identification Strategy Use</i>			
	SPECIFIC COMMON GROUND	SPECIFIC ANTITHESIS	TRANSCENDENT "WE"
Pre-assessment Totals	77	35	54
Post-assessment Totals	184	116	63
Percent Increased	139%	231%	17%
n = 18 students, 2 essays for the Pre-assessment and 2 essays for the Post-assessment			

Among the strategies, students increased both their COMMON GROUND and ANTITHESIS considerably. Though students still favored the COMMON GROUND strategy over any of the others, they raised their ANTITHESIS use more proportionally than COMMON GROUND. Comparatively, there was hardly any increase in the TRANSCENDENT "WE" use, about only half an instance per

person between the Pre and Post-assessment. A further discussion from the next chapter will show that the TRANSCENDENT “WE” was the least understood of the strategies, possibly because there were less instances of the strategy on social media, or maybe because the strategy is more involved in linguistic methods of creating a common group rather than relying on shared physical goods or ideas.

#### **4.6 Significance**

By using the Pre- and Post-assessment I was able to (1) measure students’ growth in audience awareness and appeal to use for judging the transfer of identification and (2) determine that students did come into the study with an initial sense of audience and how to adapt and appeal to them. This kind of awareness, however, was tempered by the fact that much of the appeals to audience were based on only general means. Yes, there was more SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION than I had originally hypothesized, but only as much as there was GENERAL IDENTIFICATION.

Despite the possible bias of essay prompts in the Post-assessment, there was a marked increase in the amount of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION while the amount of GENERAL IDENTIFICATION decreased. We may infer that in the course of the class, students’ audience awareness and ability to adapt to specific audiences increased. Students became more aware of who they were writing to and created specific arguments meant to identify with their audiences. In this sense, the methods used within the class helped these students to increase in their audience awareness and appeal by the end of the semester.

### **5.0 QUIZZES, SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSES, AND REFLECTIONS RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Rationale**

As was discussed in the section on pedagogical transfer, in order for high road transfer to



occur, students must be able to extract the principles of what they are doing in a familiar context and apply it to the new context. Perkins and Salomon (1988) call this “abstracting” and argue that once students can understand the underlying principles of what they are doing, they can then begin to transfer those principles into the new context.

This particular chapter discusses whether students understood Burke’s identification theory well enough to abstract it from the familiar context of social media and apply it to the new context of academic writing. As I was teaching my students the unit on Identification and Social Media (a six week unit at the beginning of the semester) I gave the students a quiz on identification’s sources (week three) and a quiz on identification’s strategies (week four). Throughout the unit we discussed social media and how it relates to identification and communication. We also looked at examples from public profiles as well as analyzed identification in more professional contexts. Our in-class lectures and activities focused around students analyzing their own social media profiles and practicing identification and analyzing identification in other contexts.

During this unit I asked students to complete four analyses of their own social media practices. The first, an analysis of their own social media audience, was due at the end of week three; the second, on their social media profile, came at the end of week four; the third, an analysis on how they would adapt their social media for an employer, was due on week five; and the fourth, an analysis of identification in social media and academic writing, was finished at the end of week six. After the unit students completed three reflections, one for each of the last three major essays spaced about every three weeks throughout the semester, evaluating their own use of identification within the essay. The quizzes, analyses, and reflection allowed me to gauge what students focused on with identification, what they felt was important, and what they might

## **5.2 Quizzes**

### ***5.2.1 Quizzes Methods***

Students were given two quizzes to assess their ability to apply Burke's theory and if they knew the terminology of the theory. Both quizzes were completed on ISU's learning management system (LMS), Moodle, and were to be taken at home. Each quiz was comprised of five short answer questions (about a paragraph each).

The first quiz asked students to (1) describe what identification is and how it works, (2) explain why it was useful, and (3-5) explain what each three sources of identification was (Littlejohn's material, idealistic, and formal identification) and to give an example. The second quiz asked students to (1) discuss how identification relates to audience analysis and appeal, (2) explain how social media has helped them learn audience awareness in academic writing, and (3-5) explain Cheney's three strategies of identification and give practical persuasive examples for each strategy. These quizzes can be found in Appendix A.2.1 and A.2.2.

### ***5.2.2 Quizzes Analysis***

I looked for common themes in the student responses to the questions. As students explained identification in their own words they exposed the ways they thought about the theory, also demonstrating their knowledge of the theory in order to "abstract" it from their social media practices. Specifically, I counted how many times a thought or idea was repeated or noted when students converged on the same ideas in their answers. These themes would show what some of the thinking patterns that students had about identification were and how identification worked.

### ***5.2.3 Quizzes Results***

How the students worded their responses provided me with a better understanding of how

they defined identification and what they felt was important to Burke's theory. In the first quiz, as students articulated what they felt like identification was and why it was important, most of the responses to this quiz centered on the theme of common ground or finding similarity. All but two students mentioned something about it in their response to the first question, and 13 out of 16 brought it up in their response to the second question. The students described that they thought that as authors used similarity and common situations or interests, they were more likely to connect with their audiences. One student, Beth, said "Identification is useful because if you're trying to persuade someone of something you can put yourself on the same level as them and create common ground." Harriet added, "As you identify with your audience, they begin to feel like your ideas should be their ideas."

Students said that the efforts towards commonality and act of bringing the author to the level of the audience established better relationships and created better ethos. In fact, half of the students mentioned either ethos, credibility, trust, or respect in their response to question #2 of the first quiz. Sarah, while explaining why identification was effective, said "Identification is very useful because it appeals to our Ethos. It allows someone to automatically become more creditable [*sic*] if they like or dislike similar things as us. This method works well because it gives us a personal connection." Obviously students thought that establishing a trusting relationship is something essential in persuasion and helpful about the identification method.

In the second quiz some words that cropped up that also apply to both ethos and common ground were "understanding" and "relating." To students, identification helps the author understand his or her audience and find shared interests so that the audience can relate to the message being given and trust the author in giving that message. Students also explained within the second quiz that they felt that identification and audience analysis were invested in

understanding the audience in order to best get the point across to them on a relatable level. One of the students, Charles, explained that

Audience analysis and identification are very strongly related because identification cannot occur unless you understand your audience. Once you have analyzed your audience you will know how to successfully appeal and identify with them using the different sources and strategies of identification. The more you know about your audience the stronger the connection and appeal you can make based on identifying with them. The more you know about your audience, the more you... have the opportunity to identify with [them].

From these quiz responses, the students demonstrated that Burke's theory helped them begin to understand how audience awareness was both essential in communication and persuasion.

Not just in general communication, but from the responses in the second quiz it was apparent that many of the students also began to pick up on how these principles operated in their social media. Reflecting on his experience with discovering identification, Connor wrote, "I learned what the techniques that I used on social media meant. I used these techniques without even knowing it. Now that I know what they mean, I can implement them into my writing."

Connor also represents 8 other students who also declared in the second response of the second quiz that learning identification has helped improve their awareness and aptitude to communicate on social media.

Many of the students articulated as well that the identification they practiced on social media had relevance in their academic or professional writing. Nine of the students discussed the connections between what they wrote on social media and what they wrote elsewhere, especially in academic writing. They explained that applying the principles of identification, like what they

do on social media, could help in their professional communication:

Social media is one of the biggest ways where we see this identification happening. All the time people are constantly trying to post pictures, videos, or statuses in order to get the most likes. However we can apply this exact same concept in our daily lives, just at a more professional scale. When it comes to a job interview, we want them to like us and to hire us. In order to do that we have to be aware of how they connect and identify. We have to know what their likes and dislikes are. If you can attempt to relate to them on a personal level and a business level than [sic] already your [sic] a step ahead of the competition. (Sarah)

Not all the students were able to articulate these concepts and some did not demonstrate much in the way of understanding how to abstract the principle of identification and transfer it to new contexts. However, nearly all the students within the study were able to explain the significance of identification and its importance and relevance to communication.

## **5.3 Social Media Analyses**

### ***5.3.1 Social Media Analyses Methods***

During the first unit of the semester, students learned concepts of identification then proceeded to analyze their use of identification within their own social media profiles. The students each wrote four analyses: the Audience Analysis, the Profile Analysis, the Employer Analysis, and the Identification Analysis. The goal for Audience Analysis was to help students understand the audiences they regularly appeal to as well as practice analyzing how identification's sources could be used to describe what brought audiences together. The Profile Analysis was meant to assist students in analyzing identification strategies and demonstrate to the students how they are already using these strategies to identify with their audiences. The

Employer Analysis was an exercise where students could practice identification with a specific and new audience using the social media that they were already familiar with. The goal for the Identification Analysis was meant to help students articulate how identification works and how it can transfer from social media to academic writing.

In the Audience Analysis students analyzed their personal audience on social media and looked for general principles of the identification sources within those audiences. They first selected their preferred social media site and looked over their group of friends, followers, or contacts (depending on which one they chose) and identified three different groups within them. For example: their high school friends, their family members, and their roommates. The students were then to describe their audiences using Littlejohn's sources of identification, naming what elements of material, idealistic, and formal identification each group had. They also were to provide specific examples of these identification sources occurring within each group on the social media platform. As I stated earlier, this analysis was to help them to practice analyzing different audiences using identification and to get a sense of how this theory is already at work within their social media. For the full assignment prompt, please see Appendix A.2.4.1.

The Profile Analysis then asked students to look at their profile on this preferred social media site and analyze what strategies of identification they use to identify with each audience that they discussed within their Audience analysis. This analysis would range from their cover photo and profile picture to their about page and timeline. Again they were to use concrete examples from their own profile to support their analysis. The purpose behind this assignment was to get students to realize their own attempts at identification that they are already using on social media. For the full assignment prompt, please see Appendix A.2.4.2.

The Employer Analysis was modified from an assignment Stephanie Vie (2008)—a

composition and social media scholar—described in her dissertation on social media in the composition classroom. Her assignment was a thorough exercise that helped students think analytically about the kinds of rhetoric they would use in the familiar environment of social media. In the Employer Analysis, students were to identify a specific employer with whom they would like to work for in the future. I asked the students to describe the employer and then imagine if that employer was to scrutinize their social media profile. Students were supposed to reflect on how they would adapt their social media profile to identify with their employer in the hopes of securing a job. I asked students to provide descriptive examples to illustrate how they would accomplish this. I hoped that students would realize the persuasive ability behind audience awareness and adaptation especially with identification within the familiar format of their social media. For the full assignment prompt, please see Appendix A.2.4.3.

In their final analysis, the Identification Analysis, I asked students to properly explain and define identification and to discuss the relationship between identification on social media and identification in academic writing. I allowed students to use parts of their former analyses for examples in this assignment. Students were to use this assignment as a place where they could articulate the abstraction of identification from social media to transfer it to academic writing. For the full assignment prompt, please see Appendix A.2.4.4.

### ***5.3.2 Analysis of Social Media Analyses***

Like the quizzes, in these analyses I looked for recurring patterns that students focused on. These general patterns across the class would help me to understand how well students were internalizing Burke's identification theory. Also, by looking over the analyses in this way, I could notice which elements of the theory students learned the best and what they might have missed. These elements would provide me with information into how well certain assignments

## **5.4 Social Media Analyses Results**

### ***5.4.1 Audience Analysis Results***

Everyone had a lot to say about identification and how the individual sources of identification were at play among their friends on social media. I originally thought that students who felt less comfortable with the theory might not write as much, not finding much to talk about. However, every single student saw the connections between Burke's theory and their own social media interactions. Every single student had many specific examples of how certain pictures, status updates, about pages, and shares/likes/comments were examples of identification.

Despite the sheer number of examples to use from their social media, students as a whole were savvy about how these specific instances helped create larger identifications which connected both them and their friends to their audiences. For the most part, students paid equal attention to each of the sources of identification, like the assignment prompt asked for; however, some students noticed trends within their own social media audiences that I discovered to be common among some of their classmates' analyses. Sarah provided an insightful explanation as to how identification developed over a relationship that appeared characteristic of many of the students:

Formal identification seems to be the starting step or the root of it all. At first I connect with them on a group level, so maybe we all have the same classes or work at the same place. Next it gets... more intimate, it becomes more of an idealistic identification. I start to find out what we share that is in common, most of the time it is really simple things, like if we both like to eat Chinese food or if we both like to read. The more I get to know them the more our ideas, and values come into play. For me personally though material



identification isn't a big thing. I feel like it is very shallow to connect just because you both own Gucci or Prada. I like looking more on the idealistic part of things. I like connecting with someone because we had [*sic*] the same passions, and facebook [*sic*] does a great job of being able to do that easily.

Students seemed to value idealistic identification the most, showing how the idealistic trends were where they felt a greater sense of connection with their audience. Material identification was very prevalent, but was not discussed as having as much significance to bind two parties together. Formal identification was also very common, but mostly as the initial point of contact which got students connected with their audience: work, school, church, family, etc. These stages of using identification, though not mentioned by everyone, appeared in a few student analyses. Further research regarding how real these stages might be is worth planning for in future studies. Overall though, the students recognized each source of identification's importance in tying audiences together.

The sense for audience was developed as students became conscious of the identification among their friends on social media. Many of the practices that students performed unknowingly suddenly came into focus. Will explained how he had unconsciously divided his friends on Facebook as different group. Another student, Jim, discussed how the assignment helped him reflect on what makes a "real friend" (a member of your audience) versus someone who would just click through your profile randomly: "Connection is an important factor in [identification], for example, people who share emotion and background experience are [happy] through [their] connection. In this sense, sameness is the key point of friendship." The development of audience awareness in social media was also shared by Tanner who included, "even though all my friends have different things they identify with they can still all identify with each other." Tanner, Jim,

and Will all saw the threads that connected their audiences together, both before and after doing the analysis, and each marked on the importance of recognizing how people identify with each other in communication.

Students expanded their audience awareness with this assignment and began to see what it takes to analyze an audience in order to make a close and effective connection with them.

David concluded that

Identification is a tool that everyone uses, whether they know it or not. If one can locate how someone is identifying, it is a much better insight into that person than just a judgment of the same person. If one can not only locate it others, but also see how they themselves are using it, they can master how they want to be perceived and seen by others. Identification is a great tool, not only for the viewer, but also the writer.

I hoped that his kind of understanding of “Burke in action” would result from the assignment.

All of the students had a certain depth to their analysis in making connections about what constituted each source of identification and why. Many students also went on to discuss how the analysis helped them in understanding communication and identification better.

A concern with the assignment was that although half of the students indicated in the demographic survey that they used some other social media platform more than Facebook, all but one of the students ended up using Facebook for their analysis. The student who didn’t use Facebook used Twitter instead and produced a more poorly written assignment. Perhaps this was because I used Facebook for in-class examples and activities and students were only following my lead. However, the student himself was a weak student, and his other work throughout the class demonstrated his lack of academic skill.

#### ***5.4.2 Profile Analysis Results***

Throughout the Profile Analysis, students were able to develop their ideas of what the strategies of identification were. They also practiced analyzing how these strategies worked in a familiar environment. Like the Audience Analysis, students had a lot to say about each of the strategies and how they were at work within their own profiles. Though the assignment prompt gave them the option to explain when they felt like they didn't use a particular strategy on their social media, students still found connections between all strategies and their own social media practices.

As students discussed their use of Burke's strategies in this analysis, they demonstrated a varied understanding and application of the strategies. Most of them understood well the principle of COMMON GROUND. This mental connection was apparent from the quizzes when almost all of the students talked about how common ground was the essential component to identification. However, there were some students who misunderstood how the TRANSCENDENT "WE" and ANTITHESIS strategies worked. Most students took the concept of a "common enemy" very literally and thought of the strategy as meaning only references to high school rival teams, or fighting against a common disease like cancer. Though these are examples of "ANTITHESIS," they do not fully represent the scope of the strategy which includes any kind of common disassociation. Also, if any student was to actually get a strategy of identification wrong, it would usually be the TRANSCENDENT "WE." The few students who analyzed this strategy in error mostly thought of the strategy as when the author tries to get the audience to do something with them. While this is an effect of the TRANSCENDENT "WE," the strategy is about using collective nouns or the first person plural pronouns that would group the author and audience in the same circle. With both of these strategies, perhaps I could have used more examples including the range of what the strategy can cover to instruct the students.

Besides the analysis of the specific strategies, students really picked up on how these strategies are part of how they form their persona. Students realized that identification backs up how they decide to present themselves. Connor explained that

I try to make my profile interesting at first glance. Most people take first impressions seriously, so I try to make mine appear like I am an enjoyable person. I make my profile picture, cover photo, and about page all include something that I enjoy doing, so that people can understand what makes my world go around. I feel that by doing so, I identify with the friends that share interest with me, and we achieve stronger friendships.

This theme of carefully selecting what to post in order to create an identifiable persona was apparent in other student responses. Brooke, Harriet, and Brian all mentioned trust as an effect of carefully using identification in their social media profiles. Students were actively adapting their profiles to best fit their audiences and what they wanted from them. Harriet added, “When I posted all of the above examples, I didn’t know about these strategies, but I knew what outcomes I wanted those posts to produce.” Charles argued that

[P]eople selectively chose what they post and what they make public about themselves according to who they want to identify with. Meaning that, for the most part, people consciously chose who they want to identify with before choosing what they make public on Facebook.

This level of attention to persona is not merely for personal fulfillment, by crafting a specific persona with one’s pictures, posts, and “about” page, they are better able to connect with, and therefore identify with their audiences.

As a whole, students felt that the strategies of identification were very relevant in creating a persona that would appeal to their audiences. Sometimes they would include aspects to connect

to different audiences, but they were aware of whom they were trying to connect with, and were unconsciously using the strategies in attempts to identify with them.

#### ***5.4.3 Employer Analysis Results***

This assignment was used to assess how well students could start using Burke's identification strategies to adapt to a specific audience. Students as a whole, seemed to enjoy this assignment. All of the students showed skill in figuring out how they would use the medium they were familiar with, their social media, to identify with a potential employer. Students discussed the range of adaptations they would include, covering all three strategies of identification as well as explaining what sources they would use as well. Though the prompt asked for students to look at everything on their profile (pictures, "about" page, posts, likes, etc.), the students themselves explored how they would make the necessary changes in order to appear the most appealing to their target audience.

Besides the general adaptation using the strategies and sources of identification, there were several trends in student responses that demonstrated their beginning transfer of audience awareness. Half of the students explained or mentioned the unprofessional potential that a social media profile might have and how "inappropriate" pictures, posts, or likes could actually harm them in their attempts to identify with a "professional" employer. Social media, they discussed, was usually a site of informality, but a potential employer still would not want to see elements that would not live up to "professional" standards. Some of these "inappropriate" behaviors included posting pictures of oneself dressed scantily, using crude humor, writing profanity, demonstrating drinking and partying, or exhibiting other "explicit content." One student also explained how in her target audience, a place in the health professions, if she were to post HIPAA violations on social media, she could be fired. Several students mentioned how they

would need to actually remove content from their social media profiles in order to adequately identify, while others explained the need to continue to reflect before posting any picture or message to assess whether it was appropriate or not to a “professional” audience.

Students were very aware of the difference between appearing professional and appearing inappropriate, whether or not one’s personal character was really that way. Five of the student talked about their hypothetical adaptation of their profile as some kind of “alternate resume,” adapting their profiles from their informal tone to become a more professional strategy of identification. There was one student, though, who personally knew her potential future employer, and instead of trying to identify with him in ways that were relevant to being hired into his business, she discussed how she would identify with his personal interests to get him to hire her, thus not understanding the influence of context on the audience. This shows that while most students were understanding the idea that you must choose relevant information to your topic to effectively identify, this student was under the assumption that any common ground with her audience would suffice to persuade them.

#### ***5.4.4 Identification Analysis Results***

Students in general had a harder time articulating the transfer of identification from social media to academic writing. The Identification Analysis was to help them in this step by giving them a place to explain what identification was and discuss the connections between identification on social media and identification in academic writing. By having students explain both the sources and strategies, I could see their overall knowledge of the subject. Between the previous analyses and this one, students improved on their understanding of these concepts, especially in the sources of identification. There were a couple of students who didn’t use the identification strategies at all, and there were some who still didn’t fully grasp what the

TRANSCENDENT “WE,” was, but other than those, the students generally improved in their articulation of how the identification strategies worked.

The prompt asked for students to explain the application of identification in academic writing, and when students attempted to do so, most remained only able to re-explain how the sources and strategies applied generally, that to identify in academic writing required understanding audience and being able to relate to and interest them with subjects they could identify with. Students articulated that identification in academic writing was to help readers maintain interest, and attract them to read more of the paper at hand.

Nonetheless, students increased their ability to understand and communicate the concept in general terms from the beginning of the analyses to the end. Students discussed how a knowledge of identification helps in writing in a specific genre; Carter said “These types of formal and academic writings will dictate what your focus of identification is.” Students also explained that identification is more than just understanding an audience, it is about “[analyzing] them and [understanding] where your message fits into their life” (Harriet) or about “developing a relationship with an audience” (Charles). There were even a few students who did explain how to apply the concepts of identification to more formal writing, like Tanner, Beth, Will, Brooke, and Michelle. Mostly, the students agreed that when identifying in academic writing it would require more formal and professional measures like using credible sources, being clear and accurate, defining terms, providing proofs, and providing qualifications. However, the same student who tried to identify with her potential future employer on a certain level still carried that mindset over to this analysis as well:

For example, if your professor likes *Harry Potter*, you would try to reference your paper back to that and use examples from something that had happened in *Harry Potter*. If you

did that, you would capture your professor's interest and he or she would take the time to carefully read it because they were interested in what you had to say.

Again we see the student not understanding that context influences what strategies are relevant to use. Overall, however, as students practiced analyzing how identification operated and then applied it into new contexts, they developed a better understanding of audience awareness and how one must adapt to persuade and connect with an audience.

## **5.5 Reflections**

### ***5.5.1 Reflections Methods***

After the first unit involving social media analyses, students moved into writing essays in other academic modes: narrative, profile, and argument. With each of these assignments I asked my students to turn in a final reflection, along with the final draft of the essay, evaluating their own performance of identification within the essay with their selected audience. Each reflection was to include a description of the audience and then each and every strategy and source of identification they drew upon to identify and persuade/connect to their audience. The reflection for the Narrative Essay occurred three weeks after the unit on Identification and Social Media, the Profile Essay reflection was completed three weeks after that, and students finished the Research Essay and reflection at the end of the semester, about a month after their Profile Essay.

As will be discussed in the Essay Results chapter, students wrote all three of these essays on personal blogs created for the class to raise awareness for a nonprofit organization of each student's choice. In each essay, students were required to write to a specific audience, thus practicing their ability to adapt their writing to appeal and identify with some specific group. The reflections track their personal evaluations of their identification of a nonprofit that they are interested in to three different audiences. For the full reflection prompt, please see Appendix



## A.2.3.

**5.5.2 Reflections Analysis**

As with the quizzes and the social media analyses, I studied the reflections to see what common themes students were focusing on within their own identification. By looking at the general patterns across the class I could determine what strategies or sources of identification students believed were of the greatest value. I could also gauge what they didn't use and why, and what they might have not learned to do.

**5.5.3 Reflections Results**

As I tracked the strategies and sources of identification mentioned over the three reflections, I uncovered a large variety of responses that had interesting significance. Students overall, developed in their ability to understand their audience and make attempts to identify with them. Their self-evaluations were generally positive, but they also revealed their attitudes towards identification and how it works.

Initially, within the reflection assignment for the Narrative Essay, students were more careful about listing out what source or strategy they did for each and every time they felt like they identified with their audience. Of course, the assignment prompt specifies that students explain each and every attempt that they made, so students were more careful to follow these instructions. However, the reflection almost seemed as a retroactive identification attempt of what they did. Students generally seemed to have written their narratives first, and then went back to see what parts could be called "identification" or not to help fit the reflection assignment. Students had their stories, but from the reflections, the stories themselves did not seem to have been modified greatly to fit their audiences. In one particular response, the student talked about how they tried to choose an audience to fit the story, instead of adapting the story to fit the

audience. Because Burke's identification covers such a wide variety of elements in communication, students could easily find examples of such-and-such strategy when looking back at it. One student put it thus, "Moving on to the strategies, we have the common ground. I think this was a big part of the narrative." Not surprising either, students focused mainly on common ground, the element easiest to describe as was evidenced in the early social media analyses.

As students completed the Profile Essay reflection assignment however, they started to articulate how they were adapting their topic to fit the audience. However the amount that people actually articulated which strategies and sources decreased by almost a third. Instead, students increased in their discussion of actual examples where they attempted to identify with their audience in specific ways. One student, Harriet, though proficient in her use of identification, failed to mention what kinds of strategies or sources of identification she was using:

The department I chose includes degrees in Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice. I was able to identify with them because a child in foster care is often assigned a social worker, students and teachers alike in this field could most certainly identify with this profile. I also talked about how traveling in trash bags could affect children mentally. Those in the field of sociology can understand why this can be detrimental to children's growth and development.... They understand why kids need certain simple things, and the confidence and encouragement it gives them.

Harriet brings up examples of ANTITHESIS with the description of kids traveling with their stuff in trash bags, she also describes the efforts of volunteers to create unique travel bags to help encourage foster children, and appeal to COMMON GROUND. But as is shown by the quote, she does not mention what strategies these appeals fall under. Obviously, these examples fall under

the specific sources and strategies, but the students, like Harriet, often neglected to mention which they were.

Within the final reflection, students both increased in their discussion of actual examples and of their articulation of which strategies and sources they used. Students continued to explain a variety of strategies and sources in their reflections as they had before. While students did communicate about more of the sources and strategies by name, they did not surpass what was expressed in the first reflection assignment. Generally with this last reflection though, is that while students didn't articulate "each and every attempt at identification," they often talked about their examples as representative of more kinds of identification they used, indicating that they were just "examples" or "instances" of a strategy they used. For example, Brian said "One of the strategies that I used a few times was antithesis" and then proceeded to discuss only a particular attempt of that ANTITHESIS. Another student, Beth, also provided only a single example to stand for a number of appeals that she made:

For instance, throughout my essay, I argued that kids who have their wishes granted by Make-A-Wish are seen to have increased hope and happiness and even an improved health status. Likewise, the students majoring in Public Health [her audience] desire to create a healthier population.

Beth used more than just this appeal of COMMON GROUND to connect to her audience, but in her reflection, this is the one she thought represented those kinds of appeals best.

Across the three reflections, students demonstrated specific knowledge of identification that increased with each reflection. Theory in hand, as students discussed their praxis of identification, their ability to discuss the practical application grew. Though students did not necessarily develop a greater sense of which aspects of identification belonged to which source

or strategy, they did deepen their understanding of identification as a tool for audience awareness and adaptation for audiences to make real connections.

## **5.6 Significance**

While the quizzes, social media analyses, and reflections did not measure students' practical ability to utilize audience awareness and adaptation, it did track what students gained about the theory of identification and what its significance was. The unit on Identification Social Media was successful in helping these students gain an appreciation for audience awareness, learn and articulate what were their identification practices on their social media profiles, and abstract those principles to express their use throughout the semester in their application in academic essays."

The transfer, or "abstraction" of identification was seen to occur as students progressed through this unit sequence. Students learned the theory as was shown by the quizzes, were able to examine its presence and influence within their own social media via the analyses, and conveyed the particulars of the theory as it occurred within their academic writing with the reflections. Within this study, these results demonstrate that these methods had an impact in teaching grounded audiences, helping students to gain an awareness of their current social media identification practices and also helping them to transfer those practices into more formal kinds of writing.

## **6.0 ESSAY RESULTS**

### **6.1 Rationale**

Students, in their transfer and implementation of identification, needed to develop more competency in adapting to specific audiences. This chapter presents the third source of data besides the Pre and Post-assessment Results and the Quizzes, Analyses, and Reflections Results

chapters in order to verify how well students were learning to transfer audience awareness and appeal from their social media. I used four formal essays over the semester to analyze students' developing competence in audience awareness and adaptation in different academic modes: analysis, narrative, profile, and argument. Also by using different academic modes, I might be able to make inferences about the adaptability of identification within different genres of writing. The Analysis Essay was completed after the first unit of the Identification and Social Media, about 6 weeks into the semester. Three weeks later the students turned in their Narrative Essay, and three weeks after that they finished their Profile Essay. Students submitted the Research essay about a month after the Profile Essay, at the end of the semester. While the first essay, the Analysis Essay, was the final assignment of the Identification and Social Media unit, the last three essays were part of a blog that students each created individually on a nonprofit organization of their choice. Students used Google's free blogging service, Blogger, available to them through their school email, to create their blog. By asking students to put these essays on their blog, I encouraged them to consider how grounded in reality their audience was, giving them a means of publishing and disseminating their writing to their grounded audiences.

## **6.2 Analysis Essay**

### ***6.2.1 Analysis Essay Methods***

At the end of the unit on Identification and Social Media which took place at the beginning of the semester, students were asked to write an Analysis Essay where they analyzed their uses of identification within their social media. Students were asked to imagine that they were writing to incoming ISU freshmen about the importance of identification. Students built up to this paper by writing the three prior and shorter Social Media Analyses from which they could draw upon to write this essay. For the full essay prompt, please see Appendix A.3.1.

I analyzed the student essays the same way that I did for the Pre and Post-assessment, by looking at their SPECIFIC and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION instances of the COMMON GROUND and ANTITHESIS strategies, as well as including their uses of the TRANSCENDENT “WE” strategy. The criteria I used for these strategies are the same as I used for the Pre and Post-assessment. I also used this same criteria for the rest of the Essays. For a greater discussion of the method, please see 3.3 and 4.2.2.

### ***6.2.2 Analysis Essay Results***

Many of the students enjoyed identifying with ISU freshmen, the audience for this essay, creating vocal personas or using pop-culture references to connect to their audience, whether it be titling their essay “Identification for Dummies” or writing about granting wishes like the genie from *Aladdin*. Overall, students identified to a greater extent in this essay than I expected them to, however they had been writing to their audience of ISU freshmen for their shorter social media analyses discussed in the last chapter.

The data in Table 8 shows the total amounts that the class used of the different strategies of identification. Again, like the Pre and Post-assessment, I differentiated between SPECIFIC and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. I also put the TRANSCENDENT “WE” into its own category, due to its inability to fit into either SPECIFIC or GENERAL IDENTIFICATION.

Table 8  
*Totals of Instances of Identification in the Analysis Essay*

		SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION		GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	
Strategy	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS
Instances per Strategy	46	57	10	67	17
Total number of instances	46	67		84	
n = 18 students, 1 essay each.					

Students used COMMON GROUND far more than any other strategy. Since all but one of the students were freshmen (the other was only a sophomore) and their audience was to incoming ISU freshmen, they probably felt a closer connection with their audience’s experiences and therefore identified with them the best. Many of the SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION instances were based off of similar status and experiences, such as using “going to college” for a formal identification source example and tying in identification with the freshman audience’s own use of Facebook or other social media in getting to know people. Other SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION involved shared goals or shared desires like “getting a great grade” or that using identification “will result in being far ahead in your college career.” The high number of COMMON GROUND in GENERAL IDENTIFICATION is due mainly to students discussing the benefits that identification would have in communication in general. Helping ISU Freshmen to “understand your audience,” gain a “level of credibility and trust,” and “keep your audience interested” were some of these GENERAL COMMON GROUND examples.

Another significant note is the high use of the TRANSCENDENT “WE.” In this essay,

students used the TRANSCENDENT “WE” in a higher amount here than in any of the other essays.

This most likely comes from students being in the same academic situation and class as the audience and therefore feeling more comfortable to referring to them in the first person plural. Thus, being part of that in-group, they often referred to themselves as part of their audience through “we,” “us,” and “our.”

Students generally stayed away from ANTITHESIS, both in SPECIFIC and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. Most of the students tried to maintain an upbeat persona for their paper, possibly to garner positive attention to the benefits of learning and applying identification. It therefore could follow that students stayed away from ANTITHESIS to avoid lecturing their audience or dampening their bright message. Most of the instances of ANTITHESIS were from students talking about losing an audience’s attention and the consequences that could bring.

Table 9 illustrates students mean use of SPECIFIC or GENERAL IDENTIFICATION along with their mean total use of identification.

Table 9 <i>Analysis of Analysis Essay Totals</i>				
	SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION	GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	Total
Mean number of instances per person	3.7	4.7	2.6	10.9
Standard Deviation	2.4	3.1	2.7	4.8
n = 18 students, 1 essay each. Standard deviation of population used.				

Student used GENERAL IDENTIFICATION and SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION fairly evenly, though GENERAL IDENTIFICATION was used at least once more per student than SPECIFIC



IDENTIFICATION. The high standard deviation, over half of both SPECIFIC and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION and almost half with the total identification, shows the good deal of variation among the students. I believe this variation could be due to the differing levels of academic aptitude among the students. Psychology Dictionary (n.d.) defines academic aptitude as “holding enough ingenuity to comprehend a task at hand and carry out a cognitive act. Such abilities may be learned or inborn” (What is academic aptitude?). With most classes there is a range of scholastic skill which results in students in a class receiving a range of grades for a semester. Because these essays are college level, the skill of identifying with an audience in the college paper is also college level. Students with differing academic abilities would therefore score in the same kind of variety that they might for any essay or class. Other possibilities could include that it was still near the beginning of the semester before quite all the students were on the same page as to what identification was and how to use it, or perhaps because identification theory was still new to them, there was a wider variety as to whom was fully understanding the concepts.

### **6.3 Narrative Essay**

#### ***6.3.1 Narrative Essay Methods***

After the Analysis Essay, the students spent the next three weeks learning about narrative. For this essay the students were to write a narrative about some actual experience with a nonprofit organization or with the problem that the nonprofit serves. The purpose was to raise awareness for the nonprofit itself or for the issues that the nonprofit attends to. I asked students to choose a group from their Social Media Audience Analysis to write this essay to and identify with. Students wrote two rough drafts, one that I reviewed and gave feedback for, and one after that the students peer reviewed. The final draft students posted on the blog they were creating to raise awareness for their chosen nonprofit organization. For the full essay prompt, please see

### 6.3.2 Narrative Essay Results

Table 10 provides the totals of how much each strategy was used by the entire class in the Narrative Essay.

Table 10 <i>Totals of Instances of Identification in the Narrative Essay</i>					
		SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION		GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	
Strategy	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS
Instances per Strategy	9	44	23	39	37
Total number of instances	9	67		76	
n = 18 students, 1 essay each.					

Within the Narrative Essay Students more than doubled their use of ANTITHESIS from the Analysis Essay (27 to 60). Though use of the COMMON GROUND was still higher than ANTITHESIS, it was not by as much. This increase in identifying with their audience through the use of a common enemy is due to the fact that many of the students’ narratives were about the sad or negative experiences that students went through. Because so many of nonprofit organizations deal with undesirable societal problems or issues, raising awareness for them would highlight how “bad” these issues or problems were. Students’ narratives were most often about dealing with these problems or issues. The most common topic was illnesses or injuries: grandparents with cancers, a mother who needed blood transfusions from hemorrhaging, friends or children who had chronic or terminal diseases, a mother with multiple sclerosis, a friend paralyzed from

drunk driving, or another friend dealing with cutting herself. Other stories were about societal problems: children facing poverty and less health care in third-world countries, foster care children coming from bad situations, or people neglecting the elderly. Some of these narratives related them to the lives of their readers, thus fitting into SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION, but most of them were general appeals to pity over the plight of these people. The students whose narratives were not about bodily injuries or societal ills almost never used ANTITHESIS.

The Narrative essay also saw the lowest count of the TRANSCENDENT “WE” strategy across all four essays. Only four students used the strategy at all. I believe that because the essay was a personal narrative and that students wrote in either the first or third person singular point of view, the students did not feel comfortable using the first person plural.

Table 11 calculates the mean usage of identification per student in the Narrative Essay. The table divides the usage into SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION, GENERAL IDENTIFICATION, and total identification.

Table 11 <i>Analysis of Narrative Essay Totals</i>				
	SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION	GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	Total
Mean number of instances per person	3.7	4.2	0.5	8.4
Standard Deviation	3.4	2.8	1.0	3.1
n = 18 students, 1 essay each. Standard deviation of population used.				

The Narrative Essay was the assignment where students’ use of SPECIFIC and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION was the closest, although students were still using GENERAL IDENTIFICATION to a

greater extent by about half an instance. Total use of identification within the Narrative Essay was the lowest score among all four essays, and standard deviation was high. In general, students had a harder time knowing how to identify with their audience within a narrative format. This could be that because students are telling a specific story, either one that they know or one that they are retelling, they transmit the details and plot just like they would normally (to any audience) and then afterwards see if there are any connections to their specific audience. In other words, students might not have been used to treating narrative as a means of argument or persuasion, thus identification without specific adaptation to the audience would be low.

This essay also includes a high standard deviation in the mean usages of identification. This shows that there was not a specific or tight trend among all students as to their identification use and that while some students had a more adaptation to audience, others did not. This can be shown by the range of scores in total identification: The lowest score was only a 4, while the high score was a 13. Students' ability to learn how to identify with their audience was quite varied across the board. This perhaps could be due to the variation in academic proficiency across all the students. It might also indicate how a genre could influence identification since students had a range of abilities in understanding how narrative might function as an argument.

## **6.4 Profile Essay**

### ***6.4.1 Profile Essay Methods***

The next unit in the sequence was one where the students wrote a profile about the nonprofit of their choice. For three weeks the students learned to write in the profile genre. Like the narrative essay they wrote two rough drafts, one that I gave feedback on, and one their peers gave feedback on. They also posted their final draft of this assignment on their blog. Students were also supposed to raise awareness for their chosen nonprofit by highlighting some specific

facet of the nonprofit. Many students chose kinds of fundraisers that their nonprofits organized, some looked at history or practices of the nonprofit. I had students choose their audience, but this time they were supposed to choose a specific department at ISU to write to and identify with. For the full essay prompt, please see Appendix A.3.3.

#### 6.4.2 Profile Essay Results

The data for the strategies in Table 12 covers the totals of how often each strategy of identification was used within the Profile Essay, whether it was GENERAL or SPECIFIC.

Table 12 <i>Totals of Instances of Identification in the Profile Essay</i>					
		SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION		GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	
Strategy	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS
Instances per Strategy	16	82	21	48	16
Total number of instances	16	103		64	
n = 18 students, 1 essay each.					

The Profile Essay is where we see higher total uses of COMMON GROUND (SPECIFIC and GENERAL) than in any of the other essays and the most uses of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION. This could be ascribed to most of the students choosing an audience that fit very well with their topic and specifically focusing on the overlap between their nonprofit and their ISU department. Much of the overlap that students focused on was common goals or outcomes of the two groups. For instance, Steve’s nonprofit was the Boys and Girls Club of America (BGCA), and the audience that he chose for this essay was the Education Department. What he focused on in his profile was

how afterschool programs like the BGCA ended up increasing academic performance in kids, a COMMON GROUND goal for educators and future educators.

Table 13 shows the SPECIFIC, GENERAL, and total mean uses of identification per student in the Profile Essay.

Table 13 <i>Analysis of Profile Essay Totals</i>				
	SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION	GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	TRANSCENDENT "WE"	Total
Mean number of instances per person	5.7	3.6	0.9	10.2
Standard Deviation	3.1	2.1	1.2	3.5
n = 18 students, 1 essay each. Standard deviation of population used.				

Because many of the students did well at choosing their audience and then adapting their profile to that audience, the Profile Essay marks the first point in the semester where students began to use more SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION than GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. Students were using a mean of greater than two instances of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION to GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. Thirteen out of the 18 students used at least one more instance of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION than they did GENERAL IDENTIFICATION.

The standard deviation for SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION and total identification, though still high, is lower proportionally for the Profile Essay than for any of the other essays, showing a better trend in students and their ability to identify with their audiences. The higher standard deviation in the GENERAL IDENTIFICATION is due to the fact that students who did not do much SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION generally used a higher amount of GENERAL IDENTIFICATION instead to

connect to their audience, while students who used a lot of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION usually did not use much GENERAL IDENTIFICATION at all. For instance, Carter's profile was on the American Welding Society (AWS) and its current contributions to research. He chose the engineering department as his audience and entirely focused on how the AWS's research specifically benefits engineers and engineering students. With that tight of focus, he never resorted to GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. On the other hand, Connor, who was profiling the American Farmland Trust (AFT) and their developments in water quality for farming, chose the welding program as his audience. In his profile he connected water quality shortage of food and damage to the environment, not issues only specific to welders; thus, he used mostly GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. So the mean does not represent the spread in results very well. However, of the students that used more GENERAL IDENTIFICATION than SPECIFIC, their reflections show that many of these GENERAL IDENTIFICATION uses were deliberate. These students might not have been using appeals that applied to only their specific audience, but they were still thought out as ways to connect their nonprofit profile to their audience.

## **6.5 Research Essay**

### ***6.5.1 Research Essay Methods***

The final major essay that students worked on was their Research Essay. Over the course of a month, students learned research and argument skills and worked on their Research Essay. As before, students turned in two rough drafts, the first one I gave feedback on, and the second one their peers in class gave feedback on, and then students posted their final draft to their blog. I asked students in this essay to advocate for their audience to support their chosen nonprofit in some way. I also had them choose a new department at ISU to identify with as their audience. For the full essay prompt, please see Appendix A.3.4.

**6.5.2 Research Essay Results**

In Table 14, I present the totals of the strategies of identification for the last essay, the Research Essay. All of the strategies are tabulated, and instances of SPECIFIC and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION between the strategies are noted.

Table 14 <i>Totals of Instances of Identification in the Research Essay</i>					
		SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION		GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	
Strategy	TRANSCENDENT “WE”	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS	COMMON GROUND	ANTITHESIS
Instances per Strategy	38	77	30	37	25
Total number of instances	38	107		62	
n = 18 students, 1 essay each.					

Overall the students had the highest total number of instances of identification within the Research Essay compared to all the other essays. For example, students had the most uses of SPECIFIC ANTITHESIS in this essay than in any other, and they had very high SPECIFIC COMMON GROUND and TRANSCENDENT “WE” as well. These could be because students felt like the Research Essay provided more flexibility in methods of expression than profiles or narratives. On top of stories and exposition, students could apply identification to argument strategies, whether they be common goals and desires or mutual dislikes and problems. For example, besides using the TRANSCENDENT “WE” to connect himself with his audience Jim specifically appeals to the Engineering Department for the child support organization, UNICEF, by explaining how volunteering with them in third world countries would provide practical



experience to put on a resume as well as provide opportunities to reduce children's unsanitized water due to lack of efficient technology or equipment. He also generally appealed to his audience by explaining how this kind of service raises children's hopes (GENERAL COMMON GROUND), though he explained that he understood how people wouldn't want to go to third world countries due to some of them being more dangerous (GENERAL ANTITHESIS).

Also significant to note is that students used least amount of GENERAL COMMON GROUND than any other essay. This amount may not be much behind the GENERAL COMMON GROUND for the Narrative Essay (37 to 39 instances), but students were able to appeal to a greater extent with SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION with COMMON GROUND than rely on GENERAL IDENTIFICATION with COMMON GROUND.

Table 15 shows the mean instances of identification per student divided up into the categories of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION, GENERAL IDENTIFICATION, and total identification.

Table 15 <i>Analysis of Research Essay Totals</i>				
	SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION	GENERAL IDENTIFICATION	TRANSCENDENT "WE"	Total
Mean number of instances per person	5.9	3.4	2.1	11.5
Standard Deviation	3.5	2.2	2.7	4.0
n = 18 students, 1 essay each. Standard deviation of population used.				

This chart shows how for the Research Essay, students were able to end the semester with greater amount of uses of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION than GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. Students used SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION around 2.5 instances more than GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. Their total

identification was also higher than it had been with any of the previous essays. The standard deviation was still higher than normal, but proportionally lower than it had been with the first couple of essays, showing that student responses with the Profile Essay and the Research Essay were closer together to each other, showing less individual variation and better general trends.

Another aspect to note was that while the GENERAL IDENTIFICATION was still close to a third of the total identification used, students were consciously choosing some of these general appeals to identify with their audience. Student reflections (mentioned in the last chapter) showed how they were considering that some of their general appeals would still be important to their audience. For instance Kenneth explained in his reflection about why he used one of his general appeals in his essay:

[M]y audiences will feel sympathetic after [they] read my essay because I wrote about [how] many people are suffering from disaster or some trouble, even me. However, we can help them whenever by donating [even] one dollar. One dollar does not have value to many people but one dollar can help [someone].

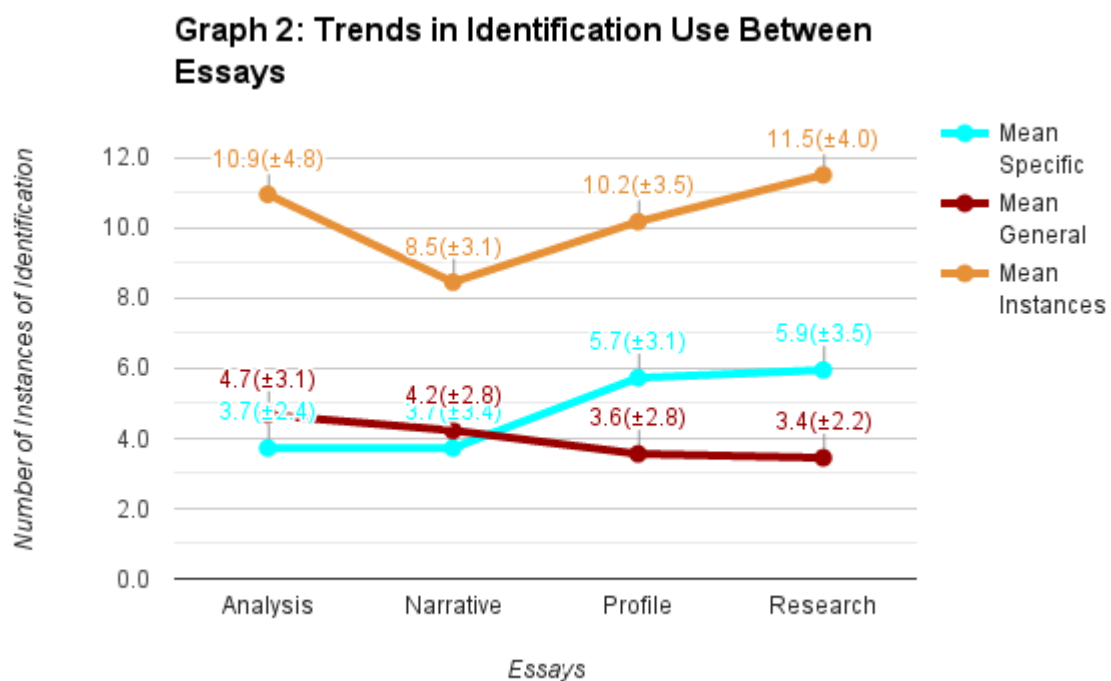
Additionally Michelle said that, “All throughout my paper I am writing about Multiple Sclerosis. That is a common enemy between pretty much any person. Nobody likes MS. That is using ANTITHESIS, because we both have that common hate/common enemy.” Both of these examples illustrate the writer explaining how their appeal is to a general audience and are not specifically targeting their direct audience. They also show how students described why they used general appeals purposefully to appeal to their audience.

## **6.6 Comparison of Essay Results**

As we compare these four essays together, we can find trends in how much identification was used over the course of the semester and see how well students were actively transferring the

strategies of identification from social media to academic writing. Likewise, the comparison of identification within each genre of essay can also indicate how easily certain genres of writing are in providing identification.

Graph 2 shows the mean use of identification for each of the four essays. It illustrates how the SPECIFIC, GENERAL and total identification changed along with the standard deviation for each. The graph plots the trends that occurred throughout the semester.



Initially, identification was high for the analysis essay, probably due to the fact that they (ISU freshmen) were the audience. However, the amount that students identified with their audience took a drop with the Narrative Essay and didn't recover much with the Profile Essay. However, the Profile Essay is where students started to use more SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION than GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. By the Research Essay, students continued to use SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION to a greater extent than GENERAL, and they were also using a little more

identification in total than they were at the Analysis Essay. By the end of the semester, this graph shows that students were identifying in higher amounts with their audience and further with a specific audience than at the beginning of the semester. There was a high standard deviation throughout all of the essays and all of the strategies, which shows that there was a good deal of variance between the students.

This high standard deviation could show that the sample taken for this study was not large enough to represent the population. However, these students were a convenience sample. The high standard deviation could also show that the validity of the results is in question. Though there might be trends in the means, there is still enough variability among the students that it could just be chance. Again, having a larger sample would enable the data to become clearer. Students could also be grouped by academic proficiency and measured in that way too to see if that made any difference in the data.

In terms of the trends between the Essays, one explanation for the decrease in identification for the Narrative Essay and the Profile Essay could be that both of these genres were not directly persuasive by nature, even though any text requires a connection to the reader. The Analysis Essay and the Research Essay both had purposes that were obviously linked to persuading their audience, while the Narrative Essay and the Profile essay appeared more informative in nature. Students failed to realize the persuasive potential that any narrative or text might have. But the reason for the drop in identification could be that in an obviously persuasive essay students could discuss the positive qualities that would be gained through their thesis (COMMON GROUND) and the negative things that would be avoided (ANTITHESIS), and they were able to link these closely with their audience and thus have a greater amount of instances where they could identify. Conversely, without directly discussing benefits to be acquired and

drawbacks to solve, students were left with only being able to mention details and description that corresponded with the audience's experience in the narrative and profile. In further research, I will need to make a greater effort at teaching students how to create a connection with audience when the connection is not as obvious, as was the case with the Narrative Essay.

Another explanation could lie in the differences between the audiences. The Analysis Essay had ISU freshmen as an audience that was already chosen for the students. With the Narrative Essay, students chose a group from their social media as their audience. And with the Profile and Research Essays, students were required to select an ISU department to identify with. It could be that since the Narrative Essay did not necessarily entail an academic audience (freshmen students and ISU departments are directly linked to academics), students writing academic essays had a harder time connecting with them. Students were also learning how to choose audiences among the ISU departments and therefore could have had a harder time with the Profile, perhaps not choosing one that they could more effectively identify with. Some of the students writing the Profile Essay chose and identified quite well, but others either didn't choose an audience that had much in common with their topic, or they had a harder time figuring out how to specifically identify with them. By the Research Essay, students could have improved their identification so that choosing a department to identify with and knowing how to identify with them would not have been as hard as the Profile Essay.

Additionally, the higher mean for the Analysis Essay could come from the fact that students had based their essays off of the previous three social media analyses, which all asked the students to identify with ISU freshmen. By the time that students were writing this fourth analysis, the Analysis Essay, to the same audience, they could have felt more confident in how to identify with them. Additionally, since the essay prompt for the Analysis Essay asked for

students to directly explain the transfer of identification from social media to academic writing, the theory of identification and students' awareness of transferring it could have been heightened and thus they might have pushed for greater identification within their writing of the essay.

### **6.7 Significance**

Regardless of the audience or the genre, students' ability to identify with audiences improved across the semester. Also, following the unit on Identification and Social Media, students' essays demonstrated a high ability to identify with audiences. Moreover the class trended upward in its SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION. These results show that for this class, students were able to transfer audience awareness skills from their social media to academic writing. As the evidence shows, students demonstrated audience awareness best with genres that are more overtly persuasive than others.

It is curious to consider that much of the identification that happens in social media is not a directly persuasive genre. If the decrease in identification in the Narrative and Profile are due to their difference in not being directly persuasive, then how can it be transfer from social media? I believe that the difference lies in that on social media, students feel at liberty with the "genre" in which they post. It would be hard to categorize a students' activity on social media within any one genre, be it persuasive, informative, or narrative, etc., and as such, they could feel that they have more options to identify at their disposal, just as in the persuasive type essays. However, these findings might represent that identification can vary on genre, or that genre can determine the kinds of identification available. These findings would be good to explore in further research. Perhaps if all the essays were of the same genre (all persuasive or all narrative), or if the order of the essays was changed it could uncover how identification operates in different genres.

Though GENERAL IDENTIFICATION remained close to SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION with all of these essays, many of the students explained in their reflections how the best ways to raise awareness for their audiences lay in some of these general attempts. So although students did not leave GENERAL IDENTIFICATION for SPECIFIC, students were still thinking about how they might relate to their audience, and how many of these ways were in general terms that applied to many people. Identification can be powerful when it specifically applies to the audience, but just because there are appeals that connect to a larger audience doesn't mean that those appeals aren't effective or should not be used. Therefore, students learned that important principle in connecting to audiences no matter the means, whether it is through experiences that only pertain to the people specified in the prompt, or through experiences that apply to humans in general.

I have specifically discussed the trends in relation to the goal to increase in SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION and decrease in GENERAL IDENTIFICATION. As was shown by students actively choosing broader appeals in the Profile and Research Essay, we can see that audience awareness is more complex than that. Students always could be thinking of the fact that even though their specified audience might be some ISU department, their blog readers could be some other group. Dealing with the issue of multiple audiences is also something that students have to balance as they write messages on social media. A post might be directed to a specific group, but the readership will be more than that. Likewise a blog could have multiple audiences reading it, and dealing with multiple audiences requires a different kind of rhetorical finesse. This finding would be significant to study in the future research of this project, but because students still need to learn what it takes to identify with a specific audience, this study mainly focuses on the increase and decrease of SPECIFIC and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION.

## **7.0 DISCUSSION**

### 7.1 Findings

This study contributes to our understanding of the rhetorical potential that social media has in composition by identifying an effective way for students to learn audience awareness and appeal. As well, this study provides a new pedagogical approach to teaching audience awareness and appeal by applying what students learn outside the classroom (real-world knowledge) as a resource inside the classroom to teach academic writing. Since there are significant transferable skills in audience awareness and appeal from utilizing social media, this study demonstrates the value that social media sites have in helping to teach composition. The study is also a comprehensive application of Burke's rhetorical theory of identification in discourse analysis, demonstrating the theory's pertinence to both social media and first year composition instruction. Moreover, this research expands on the literature of transfer, Perkins and Salomon's (1988) high road transfer operates as a sound pedagogical theory to enact the transfer of knowledge, helping students learn to abstract the principles of identification that they already use on social media and apply them to academic writing. Additionally this data shows that social media has practical transfer to skills and knowledge within the academy.

My study shows that, for this class, students were able to transfer this audience awareness and adaptation from social media to academic writing. All three of the sources within my triangulation of data demonstrate this growth. Within this study, the difference between the Pre and Post-assessment as well as the increase in SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION over the four major essays demonstrates the amount of audience awareness and adaptation that students gained after analyzing their own social media practices using Burke's theory of identification. The quizzes, social media analyses, and reflections also show students being able to articulate how they were able to enact high road transfer of their audience awareness practices from social media to



academic writing after learning Burke's identification and its place in their social media profiles.

These results have been specifically theorized by both Shepherd (2015) and Patrick (2013), as well as generally suggested by Coad (2013), Vie (2009), Swartz (2013), Balzhiser et al. (2011), Sabatino (2014) and Fife (2010). However, besides my study, there have been no other data-based studies with the transfer of audience awareness from social media to academic writing in first year composition. Yet, many researchers, such as Holt (2012), still conjecture about audience awareness in terms of persona creation: "younger social media users are primarily concerned with establishing a certain character for an audience of friends and peers" (p. 77; see also Madden et al., 2013; Madden & Smith 2010; Peluchette & Karl 2011). These studies all discuss how managing an online identity in social media is related to adapting to audience expectations. Other scholars focus on how college students learn audience awareness and adaptation as it is practiced on social media. For instance, Shepherd (2015) discovered in his survey of first year composition students that they were "very aware of their audience and the rhetorical situation" and that "The knowledge gained from enacting these practices on Facebook may be seen as 'preparation for future learning'" (p. 92; see also DePew, 2011; Buck 2012). Shepherd's survey suggests the prior knowledge that students have available to use in their rhetorical instruction.

However, similar to my findings about teaching a unit on Identification and Social Media, Shepherd (2015) also speculated that, specifically with Facebook, "Making students *aware* of the connection between Facebook and FYC [First Year Composition] may be a very positive step in helping to achieve this kind of transfer" (p. 93). Likewise, Purcell, Buchanan, and Friedrich (2013) argued that though students may have wider audiences from social media, transferring any audience awareness must be taught and cannot expected to happen on its own

(Part III), meaning that teachers, like myself, must apply themselves to teaching students to meta-analyze their social media practices in order for transfer to occur.

One major finding of the study was the increase of students' awareness for specific versus general audiences. The Pre-assessment found many students were either unaware of the specific audience in the test or unable to adapt to them. Instead they were using appeals that identified with a very general audience. By the Post-assessment, students decreased the amount of general audience appeals; at the same time, increasing their amount of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION, this demonstrating a greater awareness of who their specific audience was and how to appeal specifically to them. As students analyzed identification presence in their social media profiles, they began to utilize the theory better in their academic writing. I saw this trend of increased use of SPECIFIC IDENTIFICATION employed in the academic essays in the study. In addition to GENERAL IDENTIFICATION, another finding is that as students practiced identifying with their audience, they achieved a greater awareness of what general identification appeals should be used with their audience. Not all identification happens on the specific level, and Burke would argue that identification will generalize until effective common ground is found and established. Students became aware of this and wrote about it their reflections, and used GENERAL IDENTIFICATION in more effective ways to connect with their audience within their major essays.

Patrick (2013) also theorized this awareness of a specific audience from social media. Though not an empirical based study, and referencing only the application to other digital writing (not academic), she discussed how Facebook can engender awareness of specific identification in what she called the "particular" audience, explaining that "the Facebook profile page seeks communion with its particular audience and each user makes conscious choices

regarding the information they put on their profile page to keep that particular audience engaged”

(Part I). She argued,

By teaching students audience awareness and how that awareness ties into the information they choose to make present online, we can help students to think critically about online profiles. Once this lesson is planted into their minds, we can help students learn to apply these same strategies when working with anything in the technological realm. (Part II).

Burke’s identification within my study demonstrates what Patrick hypothesized. However, it is important to note that an exploration of multiple audiences for a single text (like what happens on social media or on blogs) is needed in order to better understand the dynamics for appealing to more general audiences.

Beyond just SPECIFIC and GENERAL IDENTIFICATION, this study found that for these students, the genre and topic of their writing changed how much they used the different identification strategies and sources, and that not all the strategies and sources were considered equal in terms of effectiveness. Within their social media, students demonstrated how that though formal identification (connection through shared or similar groups or events like school, clubs, family or a concert) initially brought students together with their audiences, and material identification (associations through similar status, location, or physical possessions and tastes) created some COMMON GROUND, idealistic identification (shared ideals, values, and beliefs) was what students and their audiences valued the most in their identification. Idealistic identification remained the strongest and most effective means of connection and persuasion in their social media.

Among the identification strategies, establishing COMMON GROUND was always the most

common strategy used, both in their social media and in all of their academic writing, perhaps because students felt that positivity was better than connecting over a common enemy or dislike (ANTITHESIS strategy). However, because more student narratives and pre-assessment tasks were related to the negative experiences that nonprofits are trying to improve, more students used more ANTITHESIS to identify in those assignments with their audience. Moreover, the TRANSCENDENT “WE” strategy (use of collective nouns or first person plural nouns to linguistically “act together”) was the strategy least used by students, possibly because it was the hardest concept to grasp. Social media does not often utilize this identification strategy, and so the students possibly had less examples to go on or less prior experience to transfer. However, this lack of the TRANSCENDENT “WE” may suggest that students are less collectively centered, and more focused on their own person.

By genre, the most significant change was that students used less identification during Narrative Essay and Profile Essay. I have theorized that this possibly is due to the fact that because these genres don’t explicitly involve argument strategies, students were less aware of the opportunities to identify with their audiences. On the other hand, because the Analysis Essay, the Research Essay, and the Pre and Post-assessment were all obviously argumentative based, students could connect with their audience using narrative, expository information, and the different argument strategies all at once. In addition, these persuasion based genres also saw a greater use of the TRANSCENDENT “WE” strategy, possibly because students felt like they could linguistically unite with their audience in working together towards a common goal.

Besides students' transfer and my analysis of Burke’s theory, I found that using social media to teach composition had the added effect of increasing student interest and motivation. When I conducted these activities within my own class, the students responded well to using a

medium that most of them were already familiar with. Because the artifact for analysis was their own social media profiles and friends, my students could critically reflect more deeply because of that level of familiarity. These students also enjoyed analyzing an artifact that had real-world significance to them. They could see the applicability of identification better because of how well they could see it operating within social media. The identification with an employer exercise (adapted from Vie, 2007) was also popular and allowed my class to see how identification's strategies could be turned to a more formal and specific audience for a specific purpose within social media. Beyond just learning how to identify in academic writing, understanding that social media profiles are often viewed in the business world can allow students to be better prepared for employment (Holt, 2012; Madden & Smith, 2010).

In a debriefing survey where I gathered students' opinions at the end of the semester, the students themselves almost universally shared that social media helped them learn the concept of audience awareness. One of the students, David, said "[Social media] was a very great tool to help learn this. I was familiar with how social media worked and I found that I was identifying and finding identification in my social media before I knew what it was called." Another student, Sarah, when asked about how much social media helped her learn audience awareness said, "It was really needed to study identification in order to effectively write a good paper. It helped a lot when I [*sic*] was trying to connect with my audience." Close to half of the students, though, explained that while they thought that social media was helpful in learning identification, it did not specifically teach them to write more persuasively. Charles explained, "It was more helpful in using identification in that type of medium but not so much in formal writing. It did teach me a lot about identification as a whole though which helped me to write persuasively in formal writing." However, the other half the class expressed that learning identification did help some in

writing more persuasively to academic audiences, in particular, Michelle said “When we were doing the stuff with social media, it really helped me understand what audience awareness was and why it is so important to use in all writing, especially formal writing.”

Many of the articles published on using social media to teach composition recognize student interest as a benefit. Balzhiser et al. (2011), explained that they used Facebook in their class in hopes “for quick successes and increased motivation or interest among students.” They continued,

Using a communication medium with which many students already intimately connected seemed like one way to do this. Using a familiar medium also seemed to address the concern that writing skills can seem to suffer when writers have competing cognitive demands.” (Notes, Conclusion).

By using a medium in which students are already interested, it gets them more involved and invested in the work. Students start seeing real-life connections between the rhetoric they learn in class and the rhetoric they practice every day.

## 7.2 Limitations

Because the research project was only a pilot study, the findings suggested in this thesis can only go so far. The results demonstrate that *within this class*, students were able to transfer audience awareness from social media to academic writing, however, improvements to the study would need to be made before these results can be applied in general to other first year composition classes. One of the largest limitations to the study was the small number of participants. Only 18 students out of one first year composition class participated in the study. The second effect of the small number of participants is that it is hard to generalize findings from only 18 students across any larger group. Another issue was that there was no control group to

compare to how the students learning identification from social media differed from those who did not. At Idaho State University, first year composition teachers are left to create their own classes and syllabi, and because of time constraints, I was unable to find another class (either my own or a fellow teacher's) who would follow the same course schedule and series of assignments but without the unit on Identification and Social Media.

Other possible limitations to the study are the concerns of bias. Since I taught this class myself, my own bias could creep into my teaching methods or into the ways that I saw the outcomes of the class. Also of potential bias is my interpretation of Burke's theory of identification, creating my own rubric as to what counted as identification, based solely on the general sources of identification from Littlejohn and the general identification strategies from Cheney. Thusly, other Burke scholars might have coded student writing differently than I in determining how much identification the students were actually showing.

Also of concern is the objectivity of some of the writing prompts in encouraging or not students' ability to identify with an audience. As was mentioned in the Pre and Post-assessment Results chapter, the "student" health topic could have invariably pushed students to choose appeals that more closely matched their audience. Also, as was noted in the Essays Results chapter, different genres and topics prompted students to choose and use different amounts of the identification strategies. Thus the trends observed within the Essay Results chapter might not be growing competence in identification but possibly just variation due to those different genres and topics.

One more limitation to the study was the teaching of the unit itself. As was mentioned in the chapter on Quizzes, Analyses, and Reflections Results, some of the concepts of identification are harder to grasp. In the debriefing survey, a few students mentioned that Burke's theory of

identification could be better explained in more specific terms and taught for more practical use.

Students therefore could have better transferred their audience awareness if they had known the theory they were using better.

Future research would involve full study of this kind. Assignments would need to be fine-tuned in order to observe the effects of genre, possibly using essay that all were the same genre, such as persuasive or argumentative essays, or reversing the order of the essays used in this class. Better examples and more practical discussion of identification use would also help in conducting the unit. With this next study, three composition classes could be monitored: one class to serve as a control, and two classes taught (not by the researchers) using the unit of Identification and Social Media. Afterwards, more than one researcher could code the data with the identification rubric to ensure more consistency and validity to the results. Results would be compared between the control group class and the other two classes. The results from this study would be more valid and accurate in making assumptions as to the effectiveness of Burke's identification to transfer audience awareness from social media to academic writing.

### **7.3 Implications and Recommendations for the Composition Classroom**

As is, the study at hand does suggest tendencies in the data that encourage the use of identification to transfer students' current experiences with audience awareness in social media to writing in more formal contexts. The triangulation of the data provides greater validity to these findings as well. It is my conclusion that using these methods in the composition classroom will help students in learning and practicing effective audience awareness in their writing.

While the concept of transfer in composition pedagogy usually conjures up the idea of what students take *away* from first year composition, my study demonstrates the necessity to focus on what students are transferring *to* first year composition. Many of our students are



already digitally literate and rhetorically aware from their prior knowledge with social media sites. Though many computer and composition scholars point out students' previous experience with these digital realms as reasons to study them in composition, few composition researchers pay any significant attention to transfer of this antecedent rhetorical participation online. This study illuminates how teachers may awaken latent rhetorical abilities that students have for practical use in the classroom. To do so, Shepherd (2015) theorizes that "Making students aware of that connection [between Facebook and first year composition] may help to facilitate knowledge transfer" (p. 92). This transfer, like what Perkins and Salomon (1988) argue for high road transfer, requires teaching students the meta-awareness of what they are already doing in their personal lives to help them to abstract the principles from a familiar context and apply them to a new one. Additionally, this study shows that Burke's identification works as a theoretical structure underlying students' activities on social media sites, and students learning this theory were able to transfer their practices to a new context of writing.

My methods, as described within this study are just one way to help student transfer this prior experience. I argue that within a composition class it is important to teach Kenneth Burke's theory of identification. The concept of audience awareness and appeal is as old as classical rhetoric, and many rhetoricians have sought to explain this concept and theorize how to appeal to an audience. Currently, Kenneth Burke's identification is one of the leading modern theories of audience awareness, and his process has straightforward applications. Because identification relates to both academic writing and social media, teachers can demonstrate identification concepts on Facebook or other social media sites and then also analyzed and applied (by students) in academic writing contexts. The Identification and Social Media unit I developed could be taught close to the beginning of the semester in order for students to apply identification

To teach students about audience awareness, following the bridging method of high road transfer described by Perkins and Salomon would enable the best transfer of learning. Teachers could require students to analyze their rhetorical practices and write about what they observe. The social media audience analysis, profile analysis, employer analysis, and identification analysis could be shortened into shorter in-class assignments, journals, or even expanded into full essays or taken in different directions. The important thing is that teachers actively guide students to become aware of their rhetorical practices to mediate the abstraction of rhetorical principles from social media. Teachers can encourage students to practice mindful abstraction and transfer of knowledge by examining how they approach their rhetorical situations on social media or in other contexts. Regardless of format, students have prior experience that can be tapped into. As students start to write academic essays I would recommend teachers requiring reflections for students to continue their meta-awareness of how they are appealing to audience.

By applying the principle of transfer, students engage in applying the strategies of identification from their social media to new writing environments. This transfer starts with academic discourse and ultimately leads to application of identification in any rhetorical contexts that students find themselves in.

#### **7.4 Conclusions and Future Research**

As I scroll through the posts and comments made by my Facebook friends, I like to imagine myself chatting with them over the rhetorical choices they have made. The complexity of their identifications astounds me. When I talk to my students about their social media uses, the rhetoric of their communication stands out as fertile grounds for research in its application to composition. More inquiry must be done to analyze the utility of these social networking sites.

This call is echoed by Gina Maranto and Matt Barton (2010) when they asserted, “As rhetoricians, we cannot afford to ignore the opportunities for learning, for social and political engagement, that online networking affords.” They continued, “For [information specialists, linguists, librarians, compositionists, rhetoricians, and others], technologies such as Facebook... are seen as not only essential but almost inevitable for 21<sup>st</sup>-century education.” These and many other scholars have reinforced the idea that digital rhetoric and technology are influential for pedagogy, and as a major part of those areas, social networking sites like Facebook are crucial to the field of composition research. These technologies need to be addressed because they are the way of the future.

For myself, within the data I collected with this study, I plan on analyzing the differences in gender and second language learners have in their use of identification. Also I plan on analyzing what kinds of identification appeals students made to which audience to illuminate their views of particular audiences. But beyond this pilot study and the proposed full study, other researchers need to use more empirically based studies with social media and composition. Teachers need to converge with students in the realms of composition that those students are already engaged in. By following the principles I have discussed in this study, teachers will connect and even learn from their own students in allowing them to discover and apply the principle of identification.

The call for new models of writing, curriculum, and teaching addressing these new compositional spaces has been made. This work answers that call, and I fill the gap left by a lack of empirical based studies. My research on transfer within social media and composition also addresses this gap and expand the application of transfer to these new contexts. Kenneth Burke’s identification theory, when used with social media provides such a model to “help our students

compose often, compose well, and through these composings, *become* the citizen writers of our country, the citizen writers of our world, and the writers of our future” (Yancey, 2009, p. 1).

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## **APPENDIX A: Assessment Materials**

### **A.1 PRE AND POST-ASSESSMENT**

#### **A.1.1 Pre-assessment**

(To take place on the second week of the semester, September 2).

The exam will take place on Moodle in a computer classroom on campus during class time.

You will be writing two letters on the same subject. You will have 35 minutes to write each response. Each response should be around 400-600 words, however the quality of your writing is much more important than the length. You are not allowed to look up any outside resources (no books, internet, etc.).

Think of a charity or humanitarian (non-profit) organization you know, then do both steps below.

1. Write a letter persuading ISU freshmen to help support that organization in some specific way.
2. Write a letter persuading retired Pocatello citizens to help support that organization in some specific way.

#### **A.1.2 Post-assessment**

(To take place during our finals time the last week of the semester).

The exam will take place on Moodle in a computer classroom on campus during class time.

You will be writing two letters on the same subject. You will have 35 minutes to write each response. Each response should be around 400-600 words, however the quality of your writing is much more important than the length. You are not allowed to look up any outside resources (no books, internet, etc.).

Think of a specific student health issue and a change to help the issue, (stress, sleep, addictive substances, common illnesses, safety, etc.), then do both steps below.

1. Write a letter to ISU seniors students persuading them to make the change you suggest about that issue.
2. Write a letter to the ISU Student Health Center persuading them to make the change you suggest about that issue.

### **A.2 QUIZZES, REFLECTIONS, AND SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSES**

#### **A.2.1 Quiz 1**

1. What is Identification? (short paragraph, 3-5 sentences). Explain how and why it works.
2. Why would identification be especially useful? In other words, why would this method help more than other methods of persuasion? Give at least 3 reasons. (short paragraph).
3. (1) List a source of identification, (2) explain it, and (3) give an example of persuasion for it. (Do not use any example we have already talked about in class, or that you have written about).
4. (1) List a source of identification, (2) explain it, and (3) give an example of persuasion for it. (Do not use any example we have already talked about in class, or that you have written about).
5. (1) List a source of identification, (2) explain it, and (3) give an example of persuasion for it. (Do not use any example we have already talked about in class, or that you have written about).

written about).

### A.2.2 Quiz 2

1. In one paragraph, explain how identification relates to "audience analysis" and "how to appeal to that audience."
2. Briefly explain how identifying with your audience on social media has helped you to learn about audience awareness and appeal in academic or more formal writing.
3. (1) List a strategy of identification, (2) explain how it is persuasive, and (3) give an example of persuasion with the strategy (one that you have not yet written about or that we've talked about in class).
4. (1) List ANOTHER strategy of identification, (2) explain how it is persuasive, and (3) give an example of persuasion with the strategy (one that you have not yet written about or that we've talked about in class).
5. (1) List the final strategy of identification, (2) explain how it is persuasive, and (3) give an example of persuasion with the strategy (one that you have not yet written about or that we've talked about in class).

### A.2.3 Reflection (I used the same prompt for all of them)

You need to turn in both the Essay AND the Reflection on the due date. I will not grade your essay until your reflection is turned in (this will make your paper late).

- Evaluate overall how well you identified with your audience (using the sources and strategies of identification). How did you connect with and find COMMON GROUND with your audience?
- Now explain each and every attempt you made to identify and persuade your audience.
  - You will need to explain what strategies AND sources you used AND why you believed that it would work in identifying with and persuading your particular audience.
  - When doing this, it will be necessary for you to explain who your audience is in order to clearly express why you used a particular strategy.
- Your response should be between 250-500 words.

### A.2.4 Social Media Analyses

#### A.2.4.1 Audience Analysis

**Audience and Purpose:** Imagine you are writing a book to incoming composition freshmen titled *Identifying with Your Audience*, helping students understand and know how to use audience awareness and appeal. This assignment would be a chapter titled "My Social Media Friends: Some Example Audiences." You will explain your own friends (choose a single social media platform that you currently use: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc.) with their sources of identification, giving your fans an understanding of your general social media audience and how these sources of identification work.

**Assignment:** Using Burke's strategies and sources of identification, you will analyze THREE different groups within your social media audience. This does not have to include everyone, but it should classify three different groups of people with whom you regularly interact with on your social media site. (For example, on my personal Facebook I have (1) my friends from high

school, (2) my friends from South America, and (3) my immediate and extended family).

- Your lens or tool to analyze these groups is Burke's sources of identification.
- Make sure you discuss how all the sources apply or don't to each group: material identification with physical possessions and things as well as status and position etc.; idealistic identification with beliefs, values, standards, ideas, attitudes etc.; and formal identification with groups that people share or events people have gone to, such as classes, clubs, jobs, workplace, concerts, dances etc.
- Use specific examples from that social media site in your writing.
- Attention to correct use of terminology of the kinds of sources and strategies and correct application is a requirement.

Format:

- Length: 600-900 words
- Intro: Start your analysis with an introduction that provides (1) a hook, (2) background to your analysis, and (3) your main unifying point/thesis.
- Body:
  - Organize your paper by describing each group individually. That means that your paper will have three main sections for each group.
  - For each group bring up each and every source of identification (material, idealistic, and formal) and describe how these sources connect and identify these members into a group. Use specific examples from that social media site in your writing.
- Conclusions: Write at least one lengthy paragraph about what your observations mean. Observe and reflect on what patterns you see. What interesting connections have you made with this analysis? How might you describe your social media audience as a whole? Use specific examples from your social media platform in your writing. Don't forget to apply your paper to the Audience and Purpose!

#### ***A.2.4.2 Profile Analysis***

Audience and Purpose: Imagine you are writing a book to incoming composition freshmen titled *Identifying with Your Audience*, helping students know how to use audience awareness and appeal. This assignment would be a chapter titled "How I Identified with Social Media." You will explain how you have identified with your own friends group on a social media site of your choice. This will give them a solid example of how the method of identification works.

Assignment: Using Burke's strategies and sources of identification, write an analysis of your own identification to your social media friends. Use as a source your "Who are my Friends" analysis. Attention to correct use of terminology of the kinds of sources and strategies and correct application is a requirement.

Write about your use of each strategy: COMMON GROUND, ANTITHESIS, and the assumed "we." Use specific examples from your social media site in your writing. If you don't think that you use a strategy then explain why. Use the following questions to help you write these paragraphs: Why did you choose the profile picture and cover photo you did? What strategies have you used consciously or unconsciously in your status updates, media uploads, sharing, and commenting? How do your "likes" reflect your identification? How does your "About" page reflect identification to your friends? Are there instances where you try to not identify? Justify your actions.

Go through each part of your profile: your profile picture and cover photo, your about page, your uploaded (and shared) photos and videos, your “About” page, your status updates, your notes, your games, your groups, your “shares,” “comments,” “likes,” etc. This should help you analyze your overall profile.

Format: Length: 600-900 words

- Intro: Start your analysis with an introduction that provides (1) a hook, (2) background to your analysis, and (3) your main unifying point/thesis.
- Body:
  - Organize your paper by describing each group individually. That means that your paper will have three main sections for each group.
  - For each group bring up each and every strategy of identification (COMMON GROUND, ANTITHESIS, and the assumed “we.”) and describe how these strategies connect and identify you to these members of each group. Use specific examples from that social media site in your writing.
- Conclusions: Write at least one lengthy paragraph about what your observations mean. Observe and reflect on what patterns you see. What interesting connections have you made with this analysis? Reflect on the consubstantiality that you have created with your friends. Use specific examples from your social media site in your writing. Don’t forget to apply your paper to the Audience and Purpose!

#### ***A.2.4.3 Employer Analysis***

Audience and Purpose: Again, you are still writing that book to incoming composition freshmen titled *Identifying with Your Audience*, helping students know how to use audience awareness and appeal. This assignment would be the chapter titled “How I Would Identify My Profile with My Boss.” You will explain how you would identify with an employer and company of your choosing. This will give your fans a better understanding of how identification works in a more professional context.

Assignment: Write another analysis (500-600 words) of how you would change your profile to identify with a certain employer, as if that employer was going to go through one of your social media profiles. Do not falsify (make up) information. Attention to correct use of terminology of the kinds of sources and strategies and correct application is a requirement.

Choose a specific company with a specific occupation. Explain in detail who you are trying to identify with, otherwise your fans will be confused about how you are identifying. Explain what kinds of media uploads, “likes,” comments, posts, shares, and so forth you would use to identify with that employer. This will be your evidence. Justify these choices by explaining which identification sources and strategies you are using. Use specific examples of things you would change on your social media site profile.

Go through each part of your profile: your profile picture and cover photo, your about page, your uploaded (and shared) photos and videos, your “About” page, your status updates, your notes, your games, your groups, your “shares,” “comments,” “likes,” etc. This should help you analyze your overall profile.

Format: Length: 500-600 words

- Intro: Start your analysis with an introduction that provides (1) a hook, (2) background to your analysis, and (3) your main unifying point/thesis.
- Body:

- Start by describing the specific company you are wanting to apply for. Give the necessary details so that your book's audience understands this employer.
- Next bring up how you would use all the strategies of Identification on your social media profile to connect with that employer (COMMON GROUND, ANTITHESIS, and the assumed "we.") and describe why these strategies connect and identify you to this employer. Explain what would change and why. Use specific examples from that you might use on your social media site in your writing.
- Also describe how these strategies draw from the specific sources of identification (material, idealistic, and formal).
- Conclusions: Sum your analysis up with a paragraph explaining why your identification would work and why identification is significant in applying for a job. Don't forget to apply your paper to the Audience and Purpose!

#### ***A.2.4.4 Identification Analysis Essay (Both the last Social Media Analysis and first Essay)***

Audience and Purpose: Now, you are finishing that book to incoming English composition freshmen titled *Identifying with Your Audience*. This assignment would be the introduction to the book. This analysis would be focused on teaching the future composition students about the importance of audience awareness and appeal (aka "Identification") in academic writing. You will instruct them in this principle by describing identification and demonstrating how it works with a medium like the social media site you use the most using your own analyses (the three previous ones we've worked on) as examples. Remember to focus your essay to helping incoming composition freshmen understand and know how to apply identification for academic writing. These future students should learn how to use the rhetorical principle of audience awareness and appeal from your essay.

Assignment and Form:

- This would be a polished essay (1000-1300 words).
- You should choose a title that is grabbing to your audience. You need an introductory paragraph with a hook, background, thesis, and a roadmap statement.
- This is what your essay body should look like. Do not use only one paragraph for each section. You will need to use multiple paragraphs to go into enough detail for each section.
  - An introduction of the method: what identification and audience awareness and appeal are, what the sources and strategies are, and why this principle is important both in everyday communication and academic writing.
  - An example of identification with a social media site: this includes the material from all three of your previous analyses. This example should detail what it takes to analyze an audience and come up with methods to identify and appeal to them.
  - A discussion of how this method can be applied to and made to work for academic writing with audience awareness and appeal: Use specific examples.
    - How do you feel identification applies in academic writing?
    - What things would be the same or different with identification in academic writing compared to identification on social media sites? Give specific examples.
    - How will identification look in academic writing? Give specific examples.
    - What steps should someone take to identify with their academic audience

when writing a paper? Give specific examples.

- How have your perceptions about audience awareness and appeal changed?
- What principles should be taken to future rhetorical situations?
- You will need a conclusion that sums up your essay, the main points, the thesis, leads into the rest of your book and gives a clincher.

### A.3 ESSAYS

#### A.3.1 Analysis Essay (See A.2.4.4)

#### A.3.2 Narrative Essay

**Purpose:** In creating a blog to help promote awareness about the issue that your chosen non-profit organization deals with, you will write a personal narrative that is about some experience you have had with either that issue or with the organization. Stories are effective ways at communicating ideas and messages that are otherwise dry or inaccessible. Through a narrative you can raise awareness of an issue by exploring the problems it faces or deals with, discovering the effects of the issue, and creating experiences for the readers to live and reflect on the experiences of the issue's context or situation.

**Audience:**

Carefully consider the audience for your blog. Think back to your *Facebook Friends Analysis*. You should appeal to your ONE of those groups from your Facebook (or your other main social media) audience. Focus on that group exclusively; it will help you focus the writing in your paper. You must analyze and appeal to this group specifically. Use the principles of Identification. Think about how you can create the greatest impact with that audience.

**Assignment:**

- Your story must be related to the issue or the non-profit organization.
- Choose a moment that has had an impact within your life, or was significant in some way.
- Go for a detailed specific moment (a few moments, an hour, a day or less) rather than a broad general length of time.
- Choose a memory that stands out in your mind that you can remember and write detail and description. Think of this essay as a story you are telling, with all the story elements that are appealing to read.
- Your narrative should NOT have a moral. NO SOAP OPERAS. Instead, think about what you want your audience to reflect on and think about after they have read your narrative. What themes and questions should be raised from your story?

**Format:**

- Between 900-1300 words in length.
- Make sure to include a catching title.
- Your narrative should have a grabbing opening, well-constructed organization, and as always, your story should make your audience reflect on your issue.
- Your narrative should not have an explicit moral.
- You should also use at least two images with your narrative.

Essay Details and Suggestions for writing: Narrative elements I will be looking for/grading on:

- The story helps promote awareness about the issue or the non-profit organization.
- How well you identify with your audience (using the sources and strategies of identification). Think about how you can connect with and find common ground with your audience.
- Not having an explicit moral. I do not want canned stories I can find in soap operas and instead I will look for theme and elements of reflection within your story (think about what your story *means*) and integrating that theme within the story and not just some short blurb at the start or end of the narrative.
- Using vivid and descriptive details (give your readers your experience through the senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, taste). Having a shorter moment helps with this. Using actual dialogue helps a lot.
- Proper grammar and paragraphing.
- You will refer to the handout accompanying this prompt by Rolf M. Gunnar, on Personal Narrative Assignment.

If you cannot think of a PERSONAL narrative:

- Find someone you can directly talk to (by phone or by physical interview) who would have personal experiences with that issue or with the organization.
- Call up that person and ask permission to interview them for writing a narrative about their experiences.
- Set up time (as much as you need) to interview that individual.
- Gather material by recording them, videotaping them, and/or taking notes (make sure you get permission first).
- Use your recorded material to write the narrative.

### A.3.3 Profile Essay

Purpose: In creating a blog to help promote awareness about your chosen non-profit organization, you will write a profile report on your nonprofit organization.

Your goal is to give the “shape” of this [nonprofit]—to help your reader have a clear picture of your subject. Furthermore, you want to communicate your subject from your unique perspective. This means you will be selective about details and decide how to present them so that your reader sees this subject in a particular way. You need to communicate your point of view on your subject. (Carter, 2015, Profile Essay Assignment).

This article is to help people understand the context of the nonprofit, its history, problems, major events, important facts and statistics. It is also to help people understand the organization itself and how it accomplishes its mission. By providing a profile of the organization, and the factors contributing to its goals, your audience will become educated about the subject and be more conscious of its impact.

Audience: Choose a specific department here at ISU (<http://www.isu.edu/colleges.shtml>). Your audience will be the majors and faculty of that specific department. Make sure in your identification reflection to specify which specific department you have chosen. You must analyze and appeal to this group specifically. Use the principles of Identification. Think about how you can create the greatest impact with that audience.

**Assignment:**

- This assignment is a synthesis of information and will require research. You must interview someone associated with or connected to the organization as ONE of your sources. For you to be able to understand the issue you will need to study up on it as well as the organization.
- Your essay should have a single unified thesis. In essence, narrow and focus your paper around an aspect that you can thoroughly cover in this article. Although you are reporting on information that you gather, what is essential is your opinion on it. In a synthesis you make the connections and you fill in the blanks, you read between the lines, and ultimately it is your paper, so we need your words, thoughts, and ideas.
- Include background information, major points about the issue, facts and statistics. Do not just include any and all information. Your paper needs to focus around a single unified thesis. Use trustworthy information, define key terms, and provide key information.
- Use outside sources. Do research about the topic and issue, both in the library databases as well as Google and other places. Quote/paraphrase/summarize credible information that gives specific particulars. Site these according to APA standards.
- Organize your information. Think about how you can use it to support your thesis: describe, define, analyze causes and effects, use examples, compare and contrast, etc.

**Format:**

- Between 900-1300 words in length (not including your reference page).
- Make sure to include a catching title.
- Your narrative should have a grabbing opening and introduction, a thesis, logical organization, and a conclusion.
- You will need at least FOUR different credible sources, ONE of which will be the person that you interview.
- Use APA to create in-text citations for your sources and to create a reference page.
- You should also use at least two images with your article (you will need to cite these, though they do not count as your four sources).

**Essay Details and Suggestions for writing: Essay elements I will be looking for/grading on:**

- The profile helps promote awareness about the non-profit organization.
- How well you identify with your audience (using the sources and strategies of identification). Think about how you can connect with and find common ground with your audience.
- A clear, specific thesis that presents the unified idea backing your paper.
- Logical, clear, and comprehensive organization that follows and supports your thesis.
- Information on the subject interwoven with description and narration. The writer employs explanatory strategies to teach the reader something surprising or useful.
- Clear paragraphing (topic sentences, source integration, transitions).
- Effective use of sources.
- Proper grammar and English usage.

**A.3.4 Research Essay**

**Purpose:** In creating a blog to help promote awareness about the issue that your chosen non-profit organization deals with, you will write a researched argument essay that persuades your audience to take some kind of action for your chosen non-profit organization. Every



non-profit organization needs support in some way and your project is to persuade people to support in the way that you choose. Who your audience is will greatly influence what kinds of action you want your audience to take. The kinds of actions that your audience is capable of will influence what action you will try to persuade them to do.

Audience: Choose a specific department here at ISU (<http://www.isu.edu/colleges.shtml>). Your audience will be the majors and faculty of that specific department. Make sure in your identification reflection to specify which specific department you have chosen. You must analyze and appeal to this group specifically. Use the principles of Identification. Think about how you can create the greatest impact with that audience. **CHOOSE A DIFFERENT DEPARTMENT THAN THE ONE FROM THE PROFILE REPORT.**

Assignment:

- Your research project should direct readers to take some kind of action and therefore you will need to provide arguments and research to persuade your audience to that action.
- This assignment includes a synthesis of sources to help you argue your case therefore and will require research. For you to be able to support your arguments you will need to study up on research about the issue as well as the organization.
- Your essay should have a unified, clear, and arguable thesis. Although you are using sources you gather, what is essential is your use of the material to strengthen your argument. In a synthesis you make the connections and you fill in the blanks, you read between the lines, and ultimately it is your paper, so we need your words, thoughts, and ideas.
- Do not just include any and all information. Your sources should help your paper needs to focus around a single unified thesis. Use trustworthy information, define key terms, and provide key information.
- Use outside sources. Do research about the topic and issue, both in the library databases as well as Google and other places. Quote/paraphrase/summarize credible information that gives supports your arguments. Cite these according to APA standards.
- Organize your information. Think about how you can use it to support your thesis: describe, define, analyze causes and effects, use examples, compare and contrast, etc.
- Don't forget to include a counter argument section where you bring up what opponents to your plan would say and where you provide a rebuttal to that argument.

Format:

- Between 900--1300 words in length (not including your reference page).
- Make sure to include a catching title.
- Your narrative should have a grabbing opening and introduction, a thesis, logical organization, and a conclusion. Don't forget that you are advocating a specific action for your audience to take. Also don't forget the counter-arguments section.
- You will need at least FOUR different credible sources.
- Use APA to create in-text citations for your sources and to create a reference page.
- You should also use at least two images with your article (you will need to cite these, though they do not count as your four sources).

Essay Details and Suggestions for writing: Essay elements I will be looking for/grading on:

- The essay has a specific action (as mentioned in their thesis) and effectively persuades the audience to take that action to support the non-profit organization.
- How well you identify with your audience (using the sources and strategies of

identification). Think about how you can connect with and find common ground with your audience in order to persuade them.

- A clear, specific, arguable thesis that presents the unified idea backing your paper (this should be a sentence or two describing the necessary action and why the audience must take it).
- Logical, clear, and comprehensive organization that follows and supports your thesis.
- Logical arguments created from clear argument strategies.
- An effective counter argument and rebuttal section.

Clear paragraphing (topic sentences, source integration, transitions). Effective use of sources.

Proper grammar and English usage.

## APPENDIX B: Recruitment and Survey Materials

### B.1 Research Recruitment Script:

“I am working on my Master’s Thesis and as part of it, I will be doing research. My research is looking to see how different teaching methods can help students understand the principles of rhetoric. Rhetoric is considered the art of persuasion and communication. This class will be teaching you about the rhetoric of composition. To use your writing, I need to obtain your consent. We all will be doing the same assignments and papers anyways whether or not I have your consent. These assignments are just part of the class. Both research participants and nonparticipants will do the same assignments, and giving consent means that I will be permitted to analyze your class work as part of the study (in addition to being graded for the class). Participants will also be asked to complete a questionnaire. This consent is about using what writing you produce for research. I would still greatly appreciate your help by providing consent.”

“Participating or not in the research will have NO EFFECT on your grade. For the research I will be evaluating your written work for this semester. I will only use the written work in ways that you agree to. In any use of your written work, names will not be identified. “Written work” means any essay exams, essays, blog posts, short analysis papers, reflection responses, reading responses, in-class writing, drafts, and quizzes you will complete as part of this class.”  
(Hand out consent forms)

“I will now read over the consent form.”  
(Read consent form out loud)

“Are there any student questions about the research or your consent?”

### B.2 Consent Form

As part of my M.A. thesis, I am studying how well certain teaching activities help ENGL 1101 students learn rhetoric and writing principles. I will be evaluating your written work and recordings for this semester as well as a few recorded classroom sessions. For me to use your work in this study I need to have your consent. Participating in the study is completely optional. **Whether or not you participate in the study will have NO effect on your grade in this course.**

I would like you to indicate below the uses of your written work and recording that you are willing to consent to. This is completely up to you. I will only use your written work and these recordings in ways that you agree to. Names will not be identified in any use of your written work or recordings.

“Written work” means any essay exams, essays, blog posts, short analysis papers, reflection responses, reading responses, in-class writing, drafts, and quizzes you will complete as part of this class.

“Recordings” means an audio and/or video recording of classroom activities and discussion. These recordings would be turned into written transcripts

1. Your written work and the recordings can be studied by myself and my thesis committee for the project. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. Your written work and the recordings can be part of a written research Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

report.

3. Your written work and the transcripts can be kept and used by the instructor as models for other classes in the future. Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_
4. Your written work and the transcripts may be shared at scholarly meetings. Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_
5. Your written work and the transcripts may be used as part of a scholarly publication. Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_
6. Your written work and the transcripts may be quoted, described and analyzed. Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_

I have read the above description and give my consent for the use of my written work and records as indicated above.

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Address\_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_ Age\_\_\_\_\_

### B.3 Demographic Survey

(Done in class after the informed consent was passed out, on August 28) Only those who have consented to participate in the study will complete the demographic questionnaire. Since the questionnaire will be completed during class time. Other students will be given a short reflection writing prompt (about their views on what “composition” means) to complete during the same time.

Demographics Survey for Mr. Head’s ENGL 1101 class, Fall 2014

1A. Name:

1B. To keep your identity anonymous for the research, what pseudonym would you like to go by?

2. What is your sex?

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female

3. What is your age?

- ☐ younger than 25 years old  
☐ 25-34 years old  
☐ 35-44 years old  
☐ 45-54 years old

- ☐ 55-64 years old
- ☐ 65-74 years old
- ☐ 75 years or older

4. What is your current level in school?

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the level of education of your parents?

- ☐ Some high school or less
- ☐ High school graduate
- ☐ Some College
- ☐ College graduate
- ☐ Post bachelor's degree

6. What is your ethnicity? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ White
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native American or American Indian
- ☐ Asian / Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single, never married
- ☐ Married or domestic partnership
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐ Separated

8. Are you employed? Yes, No

If "Yes," please write the average amount of hours per week.

8. Do you use Social Media?

Yes No

9. If the above answer is "no" please explain why on the back of this survey.

10. Which of the following social media sites do you use? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Google+

- ☐ Pinterest
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

11. Which social media site do you use the most?

12. How often do you check your social media?

- ☐ Multiple times per day
- ☐ Once per day
- ☐ A few times per week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ A few times per month
- ☐ Once per month or less

13. How much time per day do you spend on social media?

- ☐ 0-10 minutes
- ☐ 10-30 minutes
- ☐ 30-60 minutes
- ☐ 1-2 hours
- ☐ 2-4 hours
- ☐ 4-6 hours
- ☐ 6-10 hours
- ☐ 10+ hours

14. About how many friends/contacts/followers do you currently have on your top social media profile?

- ☐ 10 or less
- ☐ 11-50
- ☐ 51-100
- ☐ 101-200
- ☐ 201-300
- ☐ 301-400
- ☐ more than 400

15. How often do you upload, post, share, like, write, comment, chat, tweet, reply, or message etc. on social media sites?

- ☐ Multiple times per day
- ☐ Once per day
- ☐ A few times per week
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ A few times per month
- ☐ Once per month or less

16. Why do you use an online social network? Select all answers that apply.

- ☐ To keep in touch with friends and family.
- ☐ To meet new people.

- ☐ To make professional and business contacts.
- ☐ To share photos, videos, and music.
- ☐ To play games.
- ☐ To discover new music, books, films, and other entertainment.
- ☐ To find information and share feedback about brands and products.
- ☐ To promote a business or cause.
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

17. Which statement most closely describes you:

- ☐ I am skeptical of social media and do not use it at all.
- ☐ I am curious about social media but have not used it yet.
- ☐ I have tried social media but am not comfortable with it.
- ☐ I have tried social media but am just now beginning to use it personally.
- ☐ I am using social media and consider myself a "beginner"
- ☐ I am using social media more often now and am comfortable with it.
- ☐ I use social media tools and consider myself an "advanced" user.
- ☐ I use social media as a regular part of my work or professional development.
- ☐ I consider myself an "expert" when it comes to social media.
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### B.4 Debriefing

(To be done during the last week of classes during the final exam time of the class)

Mr. Head's study has been about collecting data specifically about using identification to transfer knowledge and skill about audience awareness and appeal from social media to formal and academic writing.

- The pre-assessment essay exam was to evaluate the amount of prior knowledge and skill about audience awareness and appeal.
- The initial analyses, quizzes, readings, and in-class activities were to help you learn and apply the concept of identification in social media.
- The other essays and reflections for those essays were to measure how well you were continuing to apply the method of identification to formal and academic writing.
- The post-assessment essay exam was to evaluate what you had actually applied at the end of the semester.

Survey Questions:

1. Overall, how well has this class helped you to learn about audience awareness and appeal?
2. Do you feel that your ability to persuasively address an audience has increased because of this class?
3. How much did studying about identification in social media help you to learn the concept of audience awareness and appeal?
4. Do you feel that learning about identification from social media helped you to write more persuasively to your audiences in formal writing?
5. What recommendations can you give Mr. Head about the study?
6. What other comments do you have?





# Idaho State UNIVERSITY

Office for Research Integrity  
921 South 8th Avenue, Stop 8046 • Pocatello, Idaho 83209-8046

August 19, 2014

Samuel Head, MA  
Stop 8056  
Pocatello, ID 83209

RE: Your application dated 8/19/2014 regarding study number 4139: Teaching Grounded Audiences: Burke's Identification in Social Media and First Year Composition

Dear Mr. Head:

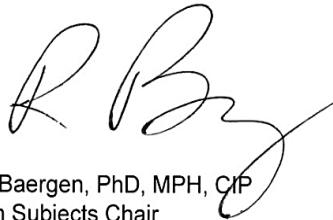
I agree that this study qualifies as exempt from review under the following guideline: 1. Research on educational practices in educational settings. This letter is your approval, please, keep this document in a safe place.

Notify the HSC of any adverse events. Serious, unexpected adverse events must be reported in writing within 10 business days.

You are granted permission to conduct your study effective immediately. The study is not subject to renewal.

Please note that any changes to the study as approved must be promptly reported and approved. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others require full board review. Contact Tom Bailey (208-282-2179; fax 208-282-4723; email: humsubj@isu.edu) if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,



Ralph Baergen, PhD, MPH, CIP  
Human Subjects Chair